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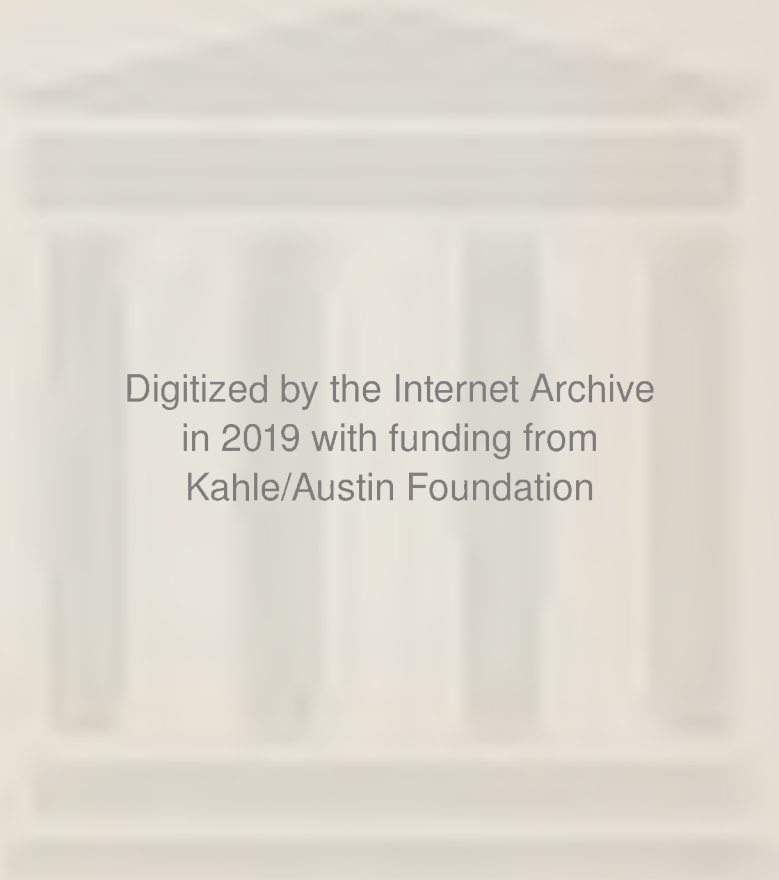
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MILTON AGONISTES

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THE BATTLE FIENDS

BRIEF POEMS

MILTON AGONISTES

A METAPHYSICAL CRITICISM

By

E. H. VISIAK

LONDON
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TO

JULIA VON KRUSENSTIERNA

"In has digressum me reginæ meritissimas laudes nemo est, opinor, qui non collaudet, nedum reprehendat; quas ego quidem sine summa ingratitudinis culpa, vel aliis tacentibus, prætermittere non potui; qui nescio qua mea sorte, sanè felicissima, aut si quis est occultus vel siderum, vel animorum, vel rerum consensus aut moderamen, tantam arbitram quam omnium minimè sperabam, omnium maximè optabam, tam mihi æquam et faventem in ultimis terris repererim."—*Defensio Secunda.*

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PREFATORY NOTE

It was an odd coincidence that, soon after I had conceived the idea that *Paradise Lost* was essentially a tragedy in the Athenian sense, a photograph of the original MS. in which it was actually drafted in that form, with *Characters* and *Chorus*, should come into my hands. For the rest, this little book presents my attempt to discharge the "debt immense of endless gratitude" that from my youth up I owe to Milton; whose property is to fortify the mind against "paralysing terrors" and false admirations; who is himself a far more romantic figure than Napoleon.

It gives me great pleasure to thank the Editors of *To-Day* and *Voices* for their permission to embody in this work some essays contributed to their pages, and Messrs. Elkin Mathews for their permission to republish a poem contained in my *Battle Fiends*. I am also much indebted to my friend, Mr. A. J. Hughes, for his trouble in reading the MS., and for making several scholarly suggestions.

E. H. V.

August, 1922.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Milton in His Own Times and After	13
II.	What is Genius?	33
III.	Inverted Power	45
IV.	Twin-Modes of Genius	59
V.	Zeal and Style	80
VI.	Philosophy of Divorce	92
VII.	Fall of the Temple	99

MILTON

In this inconstant isle, with instant zeal
To sow eternal seeds, and from the high,
Bright apogæum, raptured to discern
The harvest-home of Love and Liberty,
And men as gods and angel-labourers—
Was supernatural blindness, doomed to sight
In darkness, thwarted, racked between the poles
Of hell and heaven. O mighty Muse that thence
Rose irresistible, and higher soared
On Terror's iron pinions wrought with woe,
Fierce with compassion strung with agony,
And o'er the ruined eyry hovering hung,
Heavy with thunder, shedding bolts of fire.

E. H. V.

Milton Agonistes

CHAPTER I

MILTON IN HIS OWN TIMES, AND AFTER

I

Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum, such was the motto inscribed in the *Regii Sanguinis Clamor*, which was written against Milton after his defeat of Salmasius; and Virgil's description of the eyeless Cyclops vividly suggests the dread that he inspired among his adversaries; for his pen was like a flail. As a result of composing his reply to the "Royal Defense" and confuting the defamer of the English people, he lost his eyesight; but Salmasius lost his good name, his peace of mind, his zest in life, and eventually life itself.

Salmasius had possessed international celebrity as a scholar and controversialist. Different powers, it is said, had contested for the honour of his residence in their States, and the Pope, the Venetians, Mazarin and Richelieu had struggled in vain to secure his services by the most princely offers;

while the daughter of the great Adolphus, the eccentric, generous, and erudite Christina, Queen of Sweden, had entertained him at her court—had "almost compelled his visit," writes Symmons, "by the importunity of her invitations; and her attentions to him had been of so marked and peculiar a nature as to awaken, according to common report, the jealousies of Madame de Saumaise." Symmons says also, that "when he was indisposed, or confined to his room by the cold of the climate, the Queen would visit him in his chamber, and, locking the door, would light his fire, make his breakfast, and stay with him for some hours."

His reputation was not undeserved. The Renaissance is indebted to him for the discovery of the Palatine Anthology, and the Reformation for his energetic attacks upon the Papacy. Why, after resisting such dazzling temptations to desert his principles as those I have indicated, he should yield, at last, to the appeal "by letters and presents," of the exiled Stuart, is a puzzling question. Perhaps he had become a little enervated by the enjoyment, in literary ease and with a "substantial pension," of his international reputation. Be this as it may, he "undertook the defence of prelacy, royalty, and Charles," wrote his *Defensio Regia*, calling upon the Governments of Europe to "extirpate the fanatic and the parricide English"—and evoked a genius of whom he had probably never heard!

Utterly humiliated in the result, execrated, a Continental laughing-stock, summarily shaken off by the Queen of Sweden, who now turned her capricious eyes towards Milton, Salmasius, the "great kill-cow of Christendom," as Philips calls him, lingered for nearly two years in rancour and dejection, bitterly writing his reply, in which he demanded that Milton should be "tortured with burning pitch or scalding oil till he expired," and died just after its completion. An "idle story" of his ghost appearing to terrify his widow was in popular circulation.

But Milton's book was received with thunders of applause; and the scholars and sovereigns of Europe hastened to congratulate a genius.

In 1651, the year in which Milton's *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio* was published, Salmasius, however, had persuaded Alexander Moore, the principal of a French Protestant college, to edit, and write a dedication to, a reply to Milton by Peter du Moulin (whose name did not appear). Of Scotch parentage, but settled in France, Moore, or *Morus*, was a scholar and a renowned preacher whose personal character and talents seem to have combined elements in the genius of each nation. His emotional power in preaching was worthy of a Scotch pulpit, while his "quarrelsome and overbearing temper," writes Symmons, occasioned him to be "represented as the cause of war, like another Helen, wherever he came." The *Regii Sanguinis*

Clamor slandered Milton with atrocious invective ; and scarcely had Moore undertaken to see it through the press, when, hearing that Milton was preparing a rejoinder, he made desperate efforts to avert, or diminish, its force, inducing the Dutch ambassador to plead for him to Cromwell, and afterwards, when that failed, to Milton himself. Milton responded merely, that nothing indecorous should escape from him, and, to the plea that the book was really written by Du Moulin, and not by Moore, he said grimly, that no doubt one was as bad as the other, and that his reply should go forth as it was. This was the *Defensio Secunda*, which, like Du Moulin's attack, was composed mainly of hideous invective and abuse.

Anger, like vengeance, is a divine prerogative, a celestial attribute, which in a vessel containing any atmosphere of earth turns to deadening and coarsening fire. Milton, no more than Swift, could carry it ; and in manner and spirit, if not in motive, he falls to the level of his adversary, playing to the gallery like a war-politician and stirring up the lees of laughter by expatiating with remorseless iteration upon a sordid intrigue in the life of Moore. There are, however, pleasanter departures, as when, for instance, he compares him to a " little avant courier of a fish " running before the " Salmasian whale," or admires his bounty in " compassionating animals, and particularly fish," by preparing " so many volumes to the decent apparelling of

myriads of poor sprats and herrings," bequeathing a "paper coat to each."

Although he was now blind and was compelled by attacks of dizziness to take rest at intervals of an hour, Milton must have enjoyed writing this book, as he had enjoyed, though "overplied" as he says in a sonnet, the work of confuting Salmasius. Like other scholars of the period, he was as conversant with Latin as with English; and in the excitement of conflict he attained the greatest mastery over language. In his *Apology for Smectymnuus* he had said that true eloquence was the "serious and hearty Love of Truth" and the "Dearest Charity to infuse the Knowledge . . . into others"; and of this, his fierceness and eloquence in controversy was a testimony: it is at the point when his expression grows most coarse and dreadful that a metamorphosis is liable to occur; and in this savage and brutal composition, at a juncture when, after a taunt on his blindness, he had rebutted "shameless falsehoods" about his "shrivelled and bloodless form," there occurs a passage of incomparable pathos and dignity.

He employed the polemical usage of the period, to ferret out by espionage anything disreputable in the life of an adversary, to exaggerate every suspicion, or, in default, to cast mud at large. There was no lack of subject-matter in the erotic history of Moore; but, although Milton did not "spare his Ladle," he declined to deliver the wretched pastor,

as he might have done, to judicial punishment, contenting himself, as he said, with inflicting the "brand of the pen."

Quite as savage were his conflicts with the prelates, one of whom called for stones as Salmasius had called for boiling oil, and with the retrograde Presbyterians, who furiously assailed him from their pulpits and press, and even induced the legislature to summon him before the House of Lords. His political and theological views may be subsumed under the general head of civil and religious liberty; but he was not hostile to the monarchical principle itself, as he certainly was to the prelatical, and in his verses to the Queen of Sweden in the *Defensio Secunda*, he declares it:

> Virgin, whose hands the reins of war controll!
> Queen of the north! bright star that gilds the pole!
> Christina! view this helm-indented brow;
> Which toils have worn, without the power to bow:
> Worn, as I struggle through the wilds of Fate;
> And, old, still combat for the people's state.
> But see! to you this forehead vails its pride,
> Kings are not always by its frown defied.
>
> —*Symmons' Translation.*

In personal character, he cannot be styled a Puritan; for he possessed a most delicate, and in a word of his own coining, *sensuous* appreciation for natural, as for moral, beauty. Yet, apart from his consummate sense of music, poetry, and literary

style, he was strangely insensible to artificial beauty. His "Pandemonium" in *Paradise Lost*, though preferable to the London railway station that gave a Russian visitor his idea of the infernal regions, is a barbarous structure; and the architect, who had constructed towers in heaven, was not unjustly "sent to build in hell." The villainous taste of Mulciber is also accountable, no doubt, for the barbaric façade of heaven. Milton's Italian tour might have been expected, however, to provide some architectural description for the classical allusions in *Paradise Lost*. The apparent deficiency is the more marked in view of the formal, even architectural, character of the poem itself. Again, he is completely silent on sculpture and painting; and if he does not, like Isaiah, deprecate "all pleasant pictures," he does, indeed, ridicule collectors of old coins!

Upon another and fundamental aspect of his personality, the following passage from the *Tetrachordon* throws sufficient light:

"We cannot therefore always be contemplative, or pragmatical abroad, but have need of some delightful Intermissions, wherein the enlarg'd Soul may leave off a while her severe Schooling; and like a glad Youth in wandring Vacancy, may keep her Hollidays to Joy and harmless Pastime: Which as she cannot well do without Company, so in no Company so well as where the different Sex in most resembling unlikeness and most unlike Resemblance

cannot but please best, and be pleas'd in the Aptitude of that Variety." And his idealism on the subject of love is crystallized in the beautiful passage beginning, "Thus from the Laureat Fraternity of Poets," with its discrimination between "Love, whose charming Cup is only Vertue," and the "thick intoxicating Potion" of the "Abuser of Loves Name."

By the discipline of his life, without asceticism, he maintained the fine poise of health that Aubrey notices. In this connection, a distinguished Professor of English vainly attempts to enrol Milton in the literary company (if I may coin a word) of the *pro-retentionists*; for, although he certainly drank wine on occasion and was no Puritanical kill-joy, and what he calls a "gaudy day" in the country with jolly companions entered into his economic regime, he asserts in his second elegy to Diodati, which was written in his youth, that, although wine's "enfeebling cup" may have warmed the lyric and elegiac muse, it must be renounced for the "beechen cup" and "vegetable hoard" by the poet who would "draw listening tigers," or incite a wanderer past "Circe's wizard halls," Sirens, and the wastes of death: *Jove*, not *Bacchus*, must "swell his breast." Later he speaks of the patriotic epic which he intended to write, before he changed his mind, as being a "Work not to be rais'd from the Heat of Youth, or the Vapours of Wine."

To Milton's qualities of heart, his writings on divorce and his *Epitaphium Damonis*—the one in the universal, the other in the personal sense—provide poignant testimony, as also, of course, his devoted care of his father. Dr. Johnson, with a touch of that "robust" common sense, which, although it may be in itself a useful quality, is apt to darken judgment, held that the copious imagery of *Lycidas* was not compatible with sincere sorrow. As plausibly might one discount the elegies of Shelley and Swinburne to the shades of Keats and Landor! In his lament for his beloved Diodati, whose death desolated his return from Italy, Milton even describes the imagery on "two spacious goblets, rough with laboured gold," which he had brought home to give him! The adherent to the Johnsonian and public school tradition would pull his hat upon his brows; it has conduced to the amortization in us of the power to "give sorrow words."

Being an idealist, Milton was intensely sensitive, expectant, impulsive. "Such is the impetuosity of my temper," he wrote to Diodati, "that no delay, no quiet, no different care and thought of almost anything else, can stop me until I come to my journey's end, and finish the present study to the utmost I am able." And this impetuosity was in action the trenchant cause of his domestic calamity, as in thought it occasioned his public disillusions. He was as precipitate in marrying Mary Powell as

he was in writing his *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* upon her desertion, and (in testimony that his courage equalled his convictions) in preferring his addresses to another lady, or, for that matter, in receiving the runaway back into his house, and generously harbouring the whole Powell family! The true idealist never becomes embittered by worldly disasters; they are not of his world; and in the grievous circumstances and conditions of his closing years, Milton seems to have lost nothing of his genial charm. "He was delightful company," says his daughter Deborah, "the life of the conversation, and that on account of a flow of subject, and an unaffected cheerfulness and civility;" and Aubrey notes quaintly, that he was "extreme pleasant in his conversation . . . but satyricall. He pronounced the letter R very hard (*Litera canina.* A certaine signe of a satyricall wit. From Jo. Dreyden)." He "would be chearfull even in his goute fitts: and sing."

In his intercourse with the Italian *literati* during his Continental tour, Milton's peculiar quality of personality—at once austere and luxuriant, satirical and suave—had expanded into flower; so that they could not sufficiently express, even in lyric encomiums, their admiration; while the prestige that he subsequently obtained in the field of controversies, added, as it were, an iron crown to a golden circlet in their esteem. Yet he had a reputation in Europe rather for scholarship and eloquence than for

poetry. "He was visited much by learned," says Aubrey, "more than he did desire. He was mightily importuned to goe into Fr. and Italie; foreigners came much to see him, and much admired him, and offered to him great preferments to come over to them, and the only inducement of severall foreigners that came over into England, was chiefly to see O. Protector, and Mr. J. Milton; and would see the *house and chamber* where *he* was borne. He was much more admired abrode than at home."

II

The representative view of Milton may be described as that of a "soul that dwelt apart" in austere, self-sufficient, exalted detachment and Hebraic sublimity; a kind of Moses of poetry in a repellent Puritanical atmosphere; a frigid, haughty and forbidding personality, intolerant, domineering; an inflexible hater of kings—and of women, who, nevertheless, married more than once; one who treated his daughters as detestably as Rousseau dealt with his children: in religion exceedingly orthodox—almost, indeed, the father of religious orthodoxy; a mighty progenitor of a long line of dismal nineteenth century nonconformists.

Dr. Johnson's notorious antipathy resulted from the same psychosis; and this is a strong corroboration of his admirers' claim that he ranks as the "typical Englishman." I do not mean to imply,

however, that the " typical Englishman " is capable of Johnson's malicious aspersions upon the personal character of Milton, the popular antipathy to whom is constitutional and passive, whereas Johnson's aversion was roused into active animosity by political bias, obstinate prejudice, and by something more radical. The presence of sublimity in a man, or a nation, irritates and isolates both from within and from without. It is sweet in the mouth, and bitter in the belly, and a continual source of provocation. It endows him with a lofty egotism very different from " conceit," which is insufferable because it is an affectation of superiority, while egotism, in the Miltonic sense, is irritating because it convicts ordinary egotism of " conceit." If, at the same time, it convicts a man of hypocrisy, it is exasperating. Beyond a general realization of moral inferiority, Johnson, I think, must have been struck by some such lightning-shaft. Is this to be detected, I wonder, in his stumbling-block that Milton had been said to have rejected in the service of Charles II the office of Latin Secretary which he had held under the Commonwealth and the Protector ? Was the suspicion well grounded, that Johnson, who had accepted a pension from the House of Hanover, was secretly a Jacobite ?

Zealous hate engenders strange monsters. Disraeli relates that the Bishop of Rochester ordered the epitaph of Milton's nephew, John Philips, to be razed out of the monument, the word " *Miltono,*"

which it contained, being "not fit to be in a Christian church." This reminds me of a "patriotic" instance which occurred during the war, when a visitor to a seaside town, horrified to discover that the stones in the cross on the altar of the church were of a kind only to be found on the German sea-board, excited local opinion to such a pitch of indignation that the vicar consented to have them removed.

The Milton-haters of to-day consist of two classes; one of which may be styled *neo-Catholics* and (although Milton was not a Puritan in the sterile sense) *anti-Puritans*. The more militant and literary members of this class are under the spell of the Middle Ages, which they conceive—or rather, misconceive—in a glamour. The other class (who merit respectful sympathy) comprise that remnant of Jacobites who continue to cherish the memory of their "martyred" Charles, whose statue at the last anniversary of his execution was wreathed with flowers. It is no wonder the author of the *Eikonoklastes* * is obnoxious to them, so that, in an angry mood, they might have applauded Judge Jefferies' question at Chalfont St. Giles—"Do you not consider the loss of your sight a judgment from heaven for your treatment of the King?"—but scarcely Milton's rejoinder: "Is not the loss of his head a still greater judgment on the King?"

* Written by Milton, "by order of the Council," against the *Eikon Basilike, or the Portrait of his Sacred Majesty*, purporting to have been written by Charles I in prison, but really written by Dr. Gauden as a piece of Jacobite propaganda.

I invite any of my readers who may doubt that the hatred of Milton has persisted into our times, to send a letter to the Press in praise of Milton as a man. It would doubtless provoke such a storm, if space were afforded, as occurred some years ago in the columns of the *Daily News*. Never, indeed, did any man provoke more hostility—not the hysterical and ephemeral ebullience of political passion, but a personal and enduring rancour, such, for instance, as precipitated Johnson into lending delighted credence to the forgeries of William Lauder, who had attempted to convict Milton of plagiarism; although, in the legitimate sense of transmuting what he took, he was a greater plagiarist than either Shakespeare, Chaucer, or any other genius of the first magnitude. At the Restoration, when, after his arrest, Milton only escaped the block by Andrew Marvell's energetic lobbying in Parliament, and when the *Eikonoklastes* and first *Defensio* were burnt by the common hangman, Marvell, defending his old friend and colleague against the venomous attack of Bishop Parker, dared only to refer to him by his initials. "At that moment," writes Disraeli, "the very name of Milton would have tainted the page."

As a link between this period and Victorian times, I may recall Voltaire's jibe in *Candide*, that *Paradise Lost* was a performance by a wretched ape; although it is only just to recall that elsewhere in his writings Voltaire praises the poem highly.

It may, indeed, be argued that the popular conception of Milton is a mere echo of Johnson's ; and Johnson's vicious " Life " doubtless exerted much influence in his own and in after times, reviving, as it did in a modified form, the libels of the Restoration writers, who had themselves given fresh impetus, by " Royal authority," to the slanders of Salmasius, Morus, Du Moulin, and the rest, labouring as the editor of the *Bohn* edition of the prose works has remarked, " with all the earnestness of hirelings to dim the glory of Milton and cover the memory of the Commonwealth with obloquy." It is more than an echo. Nor is it confined to the uneducated, or even to the *unliterary*. The only genial encomium of Milton that I can remember to have heard was uttered by an eccentric scholar. " He was," said he, " a man of head and of *heart* ! " There are Milton-haters to-day as virulent as were those priests of whom Disraeli writes, that they " used to meet once a year, and, after they were well warmed with strong beer, they sacrificed to the flames the author's *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano*, as also his treatise against the *Eikon*."

" Milton," writes Mr. John Bailey in his competent book,* " was a passionate man who lived in passionate times. Neither his passions nor those of the men of his day are of very much matter to us now."

The subject-matter of his passions (except in the case of his writings on divorce, education, and the

* *Milton*, by John Bailey. (Home University Library.)

liberty of the Press) may be indifferent to us ; but the force of passion which he generated and provoked is decidedly not yet spent. Great personalities do not die. The chameleon-like, destructive Charles will always be loved; the lion-like, constructive Milton will always be hated. This is not a cynical assertion: Charles is not loved for his inconstancy ; Milton is not hated for his moral power.

It is not difficult, indeed, to understand the kind of feeling inspired by Milton, especially in those who are unacquainted with his prose writings; and most people, it would appear, are ignorant of their very titles ; even scholars, for the most part, have scarcely proceeded beyond the *Areopagitica*. There is nothing " homely " in the poems, even when, as in *L'Allegro*, they describe rustic things in familiar style. The sentiment is deep, but austere. Yet the atmosphere is very strong, being suffused with personality, which is not rarefied into the ether of such universals as the stories of the Patriarchs, *King Lear*, and *Don Quixote*. But in reading Milton's prose, one experiences a vivid, a poignant, an intimately cheering and mighty sense of his actual presence.

III

In Victorian times the asperity of the popular conception of Milton was obscured by religious veneration. *Paradise Lost* was to be seen, with the

Bible, on the drawing-room tables of people who would have been scandalized by the tenets of the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*; and, although the more imaginative readers of the great epic sometimes felt puzzled and uneasy by an admiration for its Satan, Milton, a name for religious orthodoxy, was accorded the authority almost of a Biblical writer. The very demonology of *Paradise Lost*, in fact, was confused with the Bible, although the current conception of the Devil retained its horns and forked tail despite the absence of these grotesque decorations from its Miltonic presentment. As, I think, Coleridge has observed, Milton cast the conventional mould of theology in England, as Shakespeare stamped and blazoned English history.

The Victorian view of Milton, of course, was moulded by Macaulay's essay, a panegyric, which in a corrective sense, was efficacious. Its message, however, has been much modified among scholars by Samuel Rawson Gardiner, and, indeed, by the new historical method and the great impetus towards historical science in place of the brilliant literary essay in the historical form. Macaulay is the gifted barrister speaking to a brief with all the ability and forensic power at his command; the modern historian is rather a judge in a court of appeal reviewing the evidence with strict impartiality. Macaulay prosecutes Laud, Strafford and Co., and calls, or cross-examines, witnesses in support of his case; the modern historian sums up the circumstances

in which these men acted and the conditions which surrounded them. The substitution of judgment for rhetoric, although it is advantageous, naturally entails a certain loss in the way of dramatic interest; but what the audience loses in spectacular fascination it more than recovers in the value of balanced and sober decisions. And the judicial, scientific treatment of history, involving the inquiry into sources and conditions, is not merely a method practised by historians ; it has become a spirit and an outlook, a kind of civil toleration. We can no longer be absolutists in psychology seeing men in Calvinistic demarcations of good and evil, or banishing anyone, in Milton's phrase, " for ever unto a local Hell, whether in the Air or in the Center, or in that uttermost and bottomless Gulph of *Chaos*, deeper from Holy Bliss than the Worlds Diameter multiplied."

Since Macaulay, of course, there have been many excellent writers on Milton ; notably, Dr. Garnett and Mark Pattison.

I have said that Milton was " moral," and so consciously and professedly he was. But the domain of genius is normally beyond conscious volition, although subliminal upheavals, after extreme mental torture, occasionally bring the two planes in contact ; and the genius of Milton was not " moral " in the conventional sense, any more than it was orthodox in religion or democratic in politics. Thus there was produced within him a kind of

dislocation, the nature of which it is my purpose to investigate ; a contradiction akin to the experience indicated by St. Paul and expounded by Tolstoi. Genius, or inspiration, of the sublime order, indeed, inevitably entails such conflict and disorder, such clashing of the poles. In *Paradise Lost*, which is a poem divided against itself, in which Milton sometimes sings as an epic poet and sometimes labours like a theologian with a genius for versification, contradictory aims are clearly evident ; while in the emotional stress of his divorce writings, breaking the bounds of static morality, his subconscious message becomes conscious ; his philosophy, in Coleridge's phrase, is inspired by his feelings : he is writing, as in the demonic verses of *Paradise Lost, in hell.*

That his genius was not *democratic*, as he claimed personally to be, is implied in the fact that it was of the epic or sublime order, and not the genius of *humour* in the solvent, genial sense of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Montaigne. The poet, artist, or thinker is primarily a *dictator ;* and, however winning and persuasive in style he could be, so, too, was Milton, whether in his poetry he " bolted " his " cloudless thunder," or mounted the Sinaitic rostrum of his prose. Chaucer and Montaigne are citizens (but not plebeians), speaking as man to man ; but when Shakespeare, a humane poet, attains sublimity, as in the " naked, new-born babe " passage, referred to again hereafter, he attains the

highest arc of the poetical arcana, fusing in the crucible of imagination humane and sublime feeling: he speaks with the terrible gentle accents of a god in an atmosphere in which aristocracy and democracy are blended.

In concluding this essay by referring back to Dr. Johnson, I may observe that in a far deeper sense, Milton, too, was typically English. He reveals, in an aspect, the *genius*, not the *genus*, of the English people.

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS GENIUS?

I

In the old Greek myth of Prometheus, which one naturally compares with *Paradise Lost*, it is deeply significant that there is the joint dramatic presentation of the male and female elements in life: the rebellious and indomitable will and the passive, despairing attitude of *Io*, a minor heroine. The increasing tendency of the present day to establish a scientific connection between creative genius and abnormal or semi-conscious, or even pathological states of mind, is, after all, not so modern as might be supposed. Throughout history there has been an association between the prophet, the seer, or the dreamer of dreams, and the poet; and, indeed, in unadulterated Latin the very same word describes both characters. Although the obvious inference would be resisted by those who regard poetry as being in essence an attempt to rationalize experience, the connection between inspiration as popularly understood, and the unknown or partially explored regions of psychology, seems to be finally established.

From the point of view of current theories one might almost reverse Prospero's adage, "We are such stuff as dreams are made on," and say, without levity, that dreams are such stuff as life is made of. To the synthetic imagination of the highest criticism, however, they together constitute the truth. The Shakespearean line is one of the most frequently quoted, and therefore most significant of sentences. Men quote deeper than they know. The subconscious oracle reiterates its messages, which, arresting and strange at first, are dulled by repetition; but with the rising of the psychological tide they gleam with a new significance.

Life, itself a dream in the transcendental sense, only becomes real when it achieves abstraction into essential dream, the state of ecstasy or imagination, the sublimation of life beyond space and time to the attainment of that sleep whose awakening is in heaven. Everyone, indeed, is in quest of this ecstatic abstraction: some darkly and ignorantly seek to attain it through the physical senses, others through the spiritual senses—which also is illusion if the motive be selfish, as faith without "works" is illusion, or art divorced from life; for dream, being reality, is action, the resultant passions and sufferings being the body of which it is the spirit, so that Milton truly said that the author of a noble poem must be noble in his life.

This state of essential dream comes by a self-forgetting union with an ideal, or form of love,

which may be either an abstraction—or, rather, a *conception* (for it is a real thing), or a human personality. The *lover* is a type of the *seer*; and in the experience of St. Augustine human love was transmuted into its divine apotheosis. In ordinary experience the love-idealization is temporary; but in Dante's *Beatrice*, Petrarch's *Laura*, and Milton's more rarefied *Urania*, it is eternal. The condition of the dream-state is the union of heart and mind, intellect and emotion. As an expression of this, the paradise story in Genesis is, in Milton's words, a "deep and serious Verity." Man was originally androgynous. (In the Maori myth the union and division goes back even further, to the event when the dual deity was sundered and the male heaven was divided from the female earth.) Eve was formed from Adam; and afterwards, at the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the spiritual poise of those mythically happy creatures was jarred, and with it the universal frame; an historical truth of the Dream-world which is enacted in every microcosm, or universe of the individual soul, banished from childhood's paradise at the change of adolescence into the rough external world; there by stress of experience to transmute the past Eden of instinct into the future heaven of intuition. A woeful *diaphragm*, dividing intellect and emotion, has been formed in the soul, that by suffering and struggle it may be developed into a higher unity. (I am not using the

word, *diaphragm*, to mean a part of the human body, but in the less familiar sense attached to it by electricians. They use the word to describe the porous substance which divides the two liquids, the co-presence of which in some cells is essential to complete electro-chemical action.) The harmony of instinct and natural or passive art, the primitive state, must give place to the conscious discord of experience as a means to intuition and active or controlled art. But every action involves reaction, repression expression, condensation diffusion ; the failure of the one being as fatal as that of the other. Coleridge, outcast from his paradise, wandered in passive desolation ; Milton reacted from his broken ideals with dynamic expression. Sufferings, disappointments, acts of abstinence, or involuntary repressions, are reproduced and relieved, according to a famous psychologist, in the disguised expression of dreams.

But this applies only to the experiences of ordinary life—or to some of them ; for I am far from believing that Freud's theory is applicable to all dreams. There are greater sufferings and nobler struggles. There are frustrated ideals, as well as repressed desires ; and these, in my view, are the motive of epic or tragic genius, which is manifested by a modified operation of a similar power, by a correspondingly greater force of repression, creative organization, and volcanic upheaval: a vent, an outcome by breaking violent way through obstruction;

an insurgent reaction in the world of imagination. There is involved, not the repression of a personal wish, as in the case of ordinary dreams, but the positive frustration of a universal ideal; not the whim of a day, but the aspiration of a life.

A work of such epic or tragic genius is the sublimation in a secondary or imaginative sphere of an ideal that has been frustrated in the immediate or actual world. And, as in the case of ordinary dreams, the expression of the repressed thing is disguised. But it is disguised, not merely in *form*, but in *idea*. Joseph's dream, which was naturally irritating to his brothers, in which their sheaves bowed down to his sheaf, was clearly the satisfaction of a boyish ambition, which, being a virtuous youth, he presumably had repressed; and in this respect (although it seems also to have been prophetic) it is an illustration of Freud's theory. The *image*, not the *idea*, was disguised. But in *Paradise Lost*, as I shall hope to establish, the very import was disguised, even from the apprehension of its author. It was also inverted. Indeed, the very process of art, whose function is to give pleasure, is an inversion of the process of nature, which chastens and invigorates by the instruments of pain. For art transmutes agony, as when a personal anguish is sublimated in poetry into a universal symbol; but the pain of nature is produced by a *paradise lost* in things.

II

Now, the sense, or intuition, in men of genius that the *diaphragm* which separates intellect and emotion, and thence inhibits subconscious expression, is wearing thin, acts as an incitement. Carlyle's assertion that " genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains " is expounded by Sir Oliver Lodge's theory that genius is effected by a *sustained* connection with the subconscious mind, contact with which in ordinary men is rare and momentary ; for the persistent exercise of this " infinite capacity for taking pains " is the channel by which the power to sustain connection is at last effected, the incitement that is peculiar to men of genius, and especially of epic genius, being not only the proximate cause of their ideals, but also, at their collapse, of the metamorphosis which those ideals undergo : it impels the partially emancipated to beat too impetuously upon the walls of their prison ; they see in glimpses the promised land, but they cannot, and would not, enter it alone, and at first they think, in idealizing glamour, that others, too, can see it. Genius, like love, is blind, and is subject to like vicissitudes of illusion and disenchantment.

This is very marked in the case of Milton. In Coleridge, however, a different aspect of the phenomenon of genius is indicated ; and this is also observable in the later poets of the lyrical and transcendental imagination, in which category I should

include nearly all the important verse of to-day; for, now that the founts of sublimity and *humour*, in the original sense of the word, have failed—or, rather, as I shall contend hereafter, have become diffused and disintegrated—contemporary poetry finds its principal motif in transcendental æsthetic. As Coleridge's case is complementary to Milton's it is expedient to interpolate some remarks upon his poetry and the chemistry of his imagination.

III

"The collocation of words is so artificial in Shakespeare and Milton," said Coleridge, "that you may as well think of pushing a brick out of a wall with your forefinger, as attempt to remove a word out of any of their finished passages." But the style of Coleridge (although, unlike Blake, he composed in conscious, yet passive, collaboration with his muse) "in its ardent and luminous simplicity," writes Mr. Arthur Symons, "helps him in the idiomatic translation of dreams."

These various critiques distinguish two kinds of poetic genius, the one being an artificial, the other a natural, translation of dreams, of different orders, that in life's inversion transcend ordinary consciousness. But the latter kind, to which Coleridge's poetry belongs, is not, in conformity with the principle I have enunciated, the outcome of frustrated ideals any more than the dreams of childhood

are produced by repressed desires. It embodies the dreams of a transcendental or super-childhood, and, usually representing a remote subject, enhances its original glamour by refraction : by a strange paradoxical identity of nearness and distance, the spirit of the present takes permanent form by crystallizing in the sublimated atmosphere of the past.

Thus, from the past, Coleridge distilled the atmosphere of his poetry—that twin-merit of " poignancy " in difference, and " sympathy " in nearness and likeness, which he ascribed (except *Ivanhoe* and certain others) to the novels of Scott, which, as he wrote, consists in eliminating the childish inessential from childlike recollections :

" Let each of us, then, relate that which has left the deepest impression on his mind, at whatever period of his life he may have seen, heard, or read it ; but let him tell it in accordance with the *present state* of his intellect and feelings, even as he has, perhaps (Alnaschar-like), acted it over again by the parlour fireside of a rustic inn, with the fire and the candles for his only companions."

And, having planned a collection of " Histories, Lays, Legends," and the like, he " had intended to have done this work out of hand, dedicating the most genial hours to the completion of *Christabel*, in the belief that in the former " he would be " rekindling the feeling, and recalling the state of mind, suitable to the latter."

This kind of poetry, indeed, comes only by a state

of genial mood in a delectable experience, yet an experience as different from the ecstasy or afflatus of misery that is peculiar to epic genius, as the natural delight of children is different from the "victorious agonies of Martyrs and Saints." In *Christabel* Coleridge attains to essential beauty, that, globed in tender and transcendental loveliness, becomes symbol; but not that mystery which lies beyond the confines of dream, and is *vision*, or transcendental awakening, the state of the blessed.

The atmospheric power of such poetry as Coleridge's is due to the exact tuning of the verse to the timbre of the imagination, and is dependent upon the uniting of the feelings and the intellect by the force of the pleasure received from the contemplation of the object; which dynamic contemplation creates an ideal image, the sublimed synthesis of object and subject, embodied in essential verse, or *simplest, adequate words in the fit order.*

The atmosphere of the *Ancient Mariner* is strung and transcendental yet intimate and dear with the quality of childhood. It is quiet, as the child spirit; and, indeed, the word "quiet," so frequent in the essential poetry of Coleridge, is his key-word and charm. As a child spirit, he delights in appearances of winter:

When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,

as much as in the burgeoning approach and

" meadow gale " of spring, and the intimate charm of that

> hidden brook
> In the leafy month of June,
> That to the sleeping woods all night
> Singeth a quiet tune.

The close of *Frost at Midnight* is surely the most vivid expression of the child vision in English :

> Or if the secret ministry of frost
> Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
> Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

The atmosphere of *Frost at Midnight* especially is *quiet*, with a " strange and extreme silentness," and the opening of *Christabel* especially is *strung*, with a note of silent harmony as the ringing of a supernatural chime, having we know not what transcendental meanings in the symbology of the " rock" and " clock " in the remote and intense air. As little can we tell, although in imaginative moments we seem to divine, the significance of the precise and impressive enumeration of the strokes of the clock and the responses of the barking dog, curiously akin, as they seem to be, to the specific measurements in *Kubla Khan* ; and, in fact, Coleridge himself in vain attempted to analyse the technique of his charm.

The genius of childhood, which Coleridge expressed in poetry, normally submerges at, or about, the crisis of adolescence, the sexual change and

division of thought and feeling, mind and heart; but from this change and division, pure genius would naturally be immune; and, indeed, men of genius often manifest in personal character, actions, and appearance that childlike quality of sexual—or, rather, a-sexual—synthesis which is the state of innocence, and that reliant irresponsibility which is faith.

I have already in the word "diaphragm" employed an electrical term; and genius, the state of psychical unity (or division in union and union in division), like the operation of an electric battery, seems to be dependent upon the maintenance of a "potential difference" of polarity—a polarity that corresponds to the differentiation of sex "in most resembling unlikeness, and most unlike Resemblance" (to quote Milton) in the human species—a difference of potencies continually tending towards equilibrium, neutralization, or "death." And this paradoxical state of genius is not only the cause, but also the stamp, of poetic creation; as, indeed, is indicated in the contradictory elements of the literary forms which it assumes, and very clearly indicated in the best passages of *Paradise Lost*; for the freedom by means of which these passages attain a speed far greater than is possible in prose, comes from voluntary obedience to the canons of the poetic art, being radically different from the licence of *vers libre*. The disharmony of freedom and discipline reappears in the free-will which is self-determinism, and the variety which presupposes a

unity. And, in the wider sense, as the synthesis of emotion and intellect is the condition of poetic inspiration, so the function of poetry, as of all art, is to effect that synthesis in others, if only for a moment, as by an incantation, or, in Tieck's phrase, by " casting a spell." The change at adolescence, away from purity and harmony, is *intermediately* towards equilibrium or " death."

At last in Coleridge it was effected, or partially effected—precipitated, perhaps, by opium ; and, in his dismay at the suspension of his " shaping spirit of imagination," he resorted to his drug of abstruse research, concentrating on intellect ; which, bearing further apart from emotion, left on the other side a numbly aching, querulous heart, a continual yearning for affection like a child's, and a broken will. Yet as late as December, 1796, he could write :

" I seldom feel without thinking, or think without feeling. . . . My philosophical opinions are blended with and deduced from my feelings."

In his last days the magical and lovely spirit returned, after an absence, except in glimpses, of so many desolate and dreary years :

" I am dying," said Coleridge, " but without expectation of a speedy release. Is it not strange that very recently, bygone images and scenes of early life have stolen into my mind like breezes blown from the spice-islands of Youth and Hope—those twin-realities of the phantom world ! "

CHAPTER III

INVERTED POWER

"The writer who possesses the creative gift owns something of which he is not always master—something that, at times, strangely wills and works for itself. He may lay down rules and devise principles, and to rules and principles it will, perhaps for years, lie in subjection; and then, haply without any warning of revolt, there comes a time when it will no longer consent to 'harrow the valleys, or be bound with a band in the farrow'—when it 'laughs at the multitude of the city, and regards not the crying of the driver.'" (Charlotte Brontë, of her sister's *Wuthering Heights*.)

Milton did not realize that his subconscious mind said by the voice of his *Satan*, "Evil be thou my good," and that he was, in fact, following Moloch's counsel and turning his "Tortures into horrid Arms against the Torturer." He did not understand that he was *justifying the ways of God* by demonstrating how the imagination "out of our evil seeks to bring forth good" and rekindling our spirits, as it were, by the fires of hell. Yet in composing *Paradise Lost* he must sometimes have been aware of contradiction and discordant aims; for the poem

only proceeds easily and powerfully when his ordinary mind is in abeyance. When the inhibitory action commences, the current of inspiration veers ; when it becomes insistent, the current fails ; the canvas falls slack : he can only use his engines of technique. Many passages were composed actually in sleep, and were dictated in the morning from his bed, inspired by *Urania*, who, as I have observed, was a higher idealization than Dante's *Beatrice*, or Petrarch's *Laura*—each, in its mediate aspect, corresponding in the personal sense to the Roman Catholic idealization of the Virgin.

In his childhood he read late into the night with what Robert Louis Stevenson would have called " delighted industry " ; and his Greek and Latin authors were as elder playmates to him in the Ambrosial Fields, or as old men by the hearth relating winter's tales of the Fortunate Islands. His youth was bright with the burgeonings of a glorious ambition ; his idealism equalled his egotism, and he saw his contemporaries through the lens of his own capacity ; his empyrean was serene, genius was immanent in the intense air. The charm of his personality at the period when he wrote his *Mask*, and after, only imagination can estimate. A single experience of it on the eve of his continental tour left Sir Henry Wotton " with an extreme thirst for more." To this " planet of brightness and efficacy" the darker fell its eclipse, the more powerful the terror of its change.

Some say he bid his Angels turne ascanse
The Poles of Earth twice ten degrees and more
From the Suns Axle.

It was, indeed, as if the poles of his mind had been displaced, the "Angels" being broken illusions, frustrated ideals: first, and I think of main effect, his lofty ideal and "deluded Thoughts without Cure" in his marriage, which produced the agonized charities of the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, and made him what he became, a soul driven by despair beyond despair. Most in evidence, however, is the frustration of his patriotic ideal.

He delighted in writing panegyrics; and, in 1643, in the *Areopagitica*, he said, among many other praises, that the English were "of a quick, ingenious, and piercing spirit, acute to invent, suttle and sinewy to discours, not beneath the reach of any point the highest that human capacity can soar to." In 1660, a little before the Restoration, he was hoping against hope that, at a time when all things, in the optimism of his despair, seemed yet attainable, they were not going to "fall back, or rather to creep back so poorly." "Where," he cried, "is this goodly Tower of a Commonwealth which the *English* boasted they would build, to overshadow Kings and be another *Rome* in the *West*?" He could no longer think of writing the patriotic poem for which he had collected so many notes, and which he had so enthusiastically promised

the " knowing reader," " not caring to be once nam'd abroad, though perhaps I could attain to that, but content with these *British* Islands as my World," recalling with lively zest, " what the mind at home in the spacious Circuits of her musing hath Liberty to propose to her self," what form the poem should take, " what King or Knight before the Conquest might be chosen in whom to lay the Pattern of a Christian *Heroe*."

Edward Philips relates in his " Life " of Milton, that in the year 1655 the " heighth of his noble fancy and invention began now to be seriously and mainly imployed in . . . a heroick poem, entitled *Paradise Lost*. This subject was first designed a tragedy, and in the fourth book of the poem there are six verses, which several years " (Aubrey says " about 15 or 16 yeares ") " before the poem was begun, were shown to me . . . as designed for the very beginning of the said tragedy. The verses are these :

O thou that with surpassing glory crown'd !
Look'st from thy sole dominion, like the god
Of this new world ; at whose sight all the stars
Hide their diminish'd heads ; to thee I call,
But with no friendly voice ; and add thy name,
O Sun ! to tell thee how I hate thy beams
That bring to my remembrance, from what state
I fell, how glorious once above thy sphere ;
Till pride and worse ambition threw me down,
Warring in Heaven, against Heaven's glorious King.

Concurrently with this tragedy of *Paradise Lost*, Milton had also drafted, with *persons* and *chorus*, *The Deluge*, *Sodom*, *Baptistes*, and, in a fragment entered on a page of the British history notes, *Christus patiens*. The MSS., which were found among those of his minor poems (now in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge), consist of formless and in some places inarticulate narrative, and are interspersed between the sheets containing the historical notes, which probably refer to the patriotic poem. In these confused improvisations, his mind was working more deeply than he knew; but it is necessary to develop the point I would make somewhat fully.

The real, or actual, world is but the shadow-show of the world of imagination; and, as instances in literary history have established, a writer who has got into contact with the latter, may describe distant places and peoples which he has never actually seen, with amazingly vivid and subtle realism, the virtue of which consists in the *atmosphere*. Nor is time any more than space an obstacle to imagination. Both, on the contrary, are necessary to its operation and expression in the poetic or romantic domain in the subconscious (as distinguished from the supraconscious) order, so that Coleridge truly saw in a young writer's choice of a *remote subject* one of the promises of genius.

Even in the actual world, of course, space and time are inter-related, and the time of an observed

object is conditioned by its distance and the speed of light. Thus, for instance, the sack of Rome might at present be viewed by a spectator on one of the fixed stars. It is a commonplace of science; but the man of mystical imagination requires no logical demonstration to learn that in the *supraconscious* domain space and time have no existence.*

In the subconscious imagination, however, they do exist as necessary elements; and, further, for the poetic presentation of a moving, actual experience, actual time must intervene, on Wordsworth's principle that poetry is emotion remembered in tranquillity. This, however, is retrospective time; and the apprehension of Milton at the period when he drafted his "tragedies" was *prospective.* It was not, however, a *conscious* precognition; for it is only in the seers that the subconscious becomes clairvoyant, and thence a faculty of the supraconscious. Milton's presentiment was in the sense of the saying that "coming events cast their shadows before." In his "prophetic soul," in the deep tract of his mind, gravid with disappointments and conflict, the shades of political and ecclesiastical disillusionment were thickening into the approaching night. The period when he drafted the "tragedies" could not have been many years

* In the actual world, space and time, and present, past and future, may be imagined to coalesce in the concept of an infinitely distant object viewed through infinite time. Thus the material and spiritual planes are attuned.

before the establishment of the Protectorate in 1654, and the virtual dictatorship of Cromwell; while, according to Aubrey, he began *Paradise Lost* "about 2 yeares before the K. came in." He was to learn the fallacy of putting his trust in a Governor—a "strong man" of polities—as he had already experienced the futility of putting it in a Government that attempted to impose liberty upon a people not intellectually and spiritually free.

In 1642, in his *Apology for Smectymnuus*, he broke all bounds in praising the Parliament whose "Excellence" met "in one Globe of Brightness and Efficacy," so that they were as "some divine Commission from Heaven"; now, in 1654, in the course of his long panegyric on the Protector in his *Defensio Secunda*, he exclaims:

"We are deserted, Cromwell; you alone remain; the sum-total of our affairs has come back to you, and hangs on you alone."

Of the panegyric itself, Symmons remarks:

"He could not be insensible to those egregious mockeries which had been practised on the people; but it was natural for him not to abandon without extreme reluctance the hopes, which he had so long and so fondly cherished, of the Protector's rectitude of intention; and he seems desirous of urging this extraordinary man to a just and generous use of power. . . ."

He must have been the more disappointed, then, by Marvell's letter, gently breaking the apparent

indifference with which the copy of his work, with a compliment from himself, was received by the Hero! "Whether," says Symmons unhappily, "any further notice was taken by Cromwell of Milton's present, we are not informed: but we may be assured that he was not on the list of the Protector's peculiar friends, and that the Secretary" (Milton) "would easily be reconciled to the consequences of exclusion from his employer's favor by the consciousness of commanding his respect"!

But by this time, I expect, his political and religious disappointments had availed; and, what between the "long lane" of the Long Parliament on one side, and the would-be-king, Cromwell, on the other, the dark fields of his soul were ploughed for harvest.

His "Poem," *Paradise Lost*, was published in 1666. He had gradually abandoned his design of writing a patriotic poem; the stage of his drama became the universe: his Muse was indeed "gone up to the furthest end of the Heavens." There is not a patriotic line in the whole edifice of *Paradise Lost*; although the prose works, which he used for a quarry in its building, contain passages of national enthusiasm, as, for example, the incomparable Armada pæan in *Of Reformation in England*, which, significantly, is conceived in a spirit and written in a style that harks back to the warlike religious patriotism of tribal Israel.

His final work, *Samson Agonistes*, is classical both in function and in form, and is a closer imitation of the Athenians than Swinburne's *Atalanta*, far closer than Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*; and *Paradise Lost*, though changed in form, is in substance a tragedy in the Athenian sense as far as general æsthetic theory goes—not, of course, in respect of any harmony that exists between the ideas of its theology and those of ancient religion. In the *camera obscura* of the psychical transformation, the protagonist—the subjugated yet indomitable Prometheus—appears as *Satan* and the other fiends, who, as Chateaubriand told the French Academy, represent Milton and his political associates. They alone of the characters are real; and they react so powerfully to the intolerable afflictions of their Nemesis, the implacable "Wrath and Might," that not only are they not miserable, since "to be weak is miserable," but they are so inspiring to the imagination, that the old objection to *Paradise Lost* as making evil attractive would be justified if the evil were not, in fact, a form of ultimate value. They invigorate on Aristotle's theory of purgation, relieving human sufferings by the exhibition of superhuman sufferings, fortitude, and opposition, and, in Milton's phrase, "allay the perturbations of the mind and set the affections in right tune." And, on the principle that suffering is the outcome of repression and perfect eloquence is perfect expression, Milton's *Satan* is too eloquent

to be a symbol of hell, the original meaning of which is a *closed place*. He is an open crater, emitting sublime flames that are sometimes softened into beauty, and is the product of that psychical storm which was precipitated in the mind of his author (however long it had impended) towards the break-up of the Commonwealth.

It is a striking coincidence that Milton's eyesight began to wane at, or about, the date of his apostrophe to the Sun*; and additionally striking, that, as eventually the last flicker was extinguished (and was compensated for, as he relates, by an increase of "interior light"), the idealizing faculty of his temperament and genius was withdrawn from contemporary history.

"No man knows Hell," he had written in the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, "like him who converses most in Heaven"; and the interior light that had created his external ideal, now illumined his hell—the shine and shadow of its inverted projection. In the reflection of his own image, he had seen his countrymen as a "knowing People"; in the distorted blur of its withdrawing flash, he saw them as "trees and stones." He who had seen the real, or actual, in terms of the ideal, now, in subconscious projections on the screen of night, imagined the ideal in disguises and inversions of the real. The radiant hope that had shone with such external

* He went blind through writing his *Pro Populo*, as his physicians predicted.

glow, was indrawn, casting upon a stage of darkness its inverted and dilated projections. This was the genesis of *Paradise Lost.*

And the eclipse of Milton's ideal star synchronized with worldly disaster. Save for the comfort of a devoted wife, he was as desolate as Defoe when he escaped to a remote island. Blind, in ill-health and comparative poverty, victimized by his daughters (except Deborah, who was then only nine years old), who combined with his servants to " cheat him in their marketings, and sell his books to the dunghil-women," calumniated, in danger of assassination, he was indeed " fall'n on evil dayes " ; yet he never lost the genial cheerfulness of his personality, which remained like the unblemished brightness of his eyes. And the fires of his genius burst into rekindled flame ; so that he is at once an inspiring embodiment of his transfigured Prometheus, and a superb vindication of his belief that the author of a noble poem must be noble in his life.

But in what respect was this haughty genius noble ? He was both enlarged and straitened by the crash of his ideals : emancipated in poetic power, restricted spiritually in the access of his pride. He came into his genius, as Coleridge lost his, by a psychical transformation. It was as though the " diaphragm," which I have described, had been battered in. But that genius was terrible. It was the child of a spiritual revolution ; it could

only work in hell, and vent itself by infernal rages :

highly they rag'd
Against the Highest, and fierce with grasped arms,
Clashed on their sounding shields the din of war,
Hurling defiance toward the vault of Heav'n.

This is the very eestasy of passion, the sublimation of an almost animal rage. We hear the frenzied clash, the insane yell ! It is the poetic translation of " all those wild Words whieh Men in Misery think to ease themselves by uttering." *Milton Agonistes* impersonates *Johannes Furens* ; and we fcel that, if he had not expressed himself through his devils in oblique speech, he would have lost his reason. His attitude of revolt, however, differs, not in degree, but in kind, from the revolutionary spirit of Omar, or of Swinburne, and rather bears the relation of cousinhood to the temper of the Athenian tragedies. If he had not gone mad with outragcous repression, he would, at any rate, have been deadened, and his genius would have been amortized. I have compared genius to love : it is also like the lover, the lover who has broken his heart ; whence, no doubt, ensues that *abandon*, or freedom from the constricting personal faetor, and the vent of expression in such a man as Milton. The inspiration that breathes in *Paradise Lost*, although it came only at times and seasons, beginning, as Aubrey relates, at the " Autumnall Equinoctiall " and ending about the " Vernall," is comparable in versatility with

none but Shakespeare's; nevertheless it failed to save him utterly. Although he knew not, like Coleridge, the dull and leaden misery of atrophy, he did not escape unscathed, but was, in a manner, blasted, like his *Satan*, with sublime fire:

> but his face
> Deep scars of Thunder had intrencht, and care
> Sat on his faded cheek.

"Give not thyself up, then, to fire," cries Herman Melville, "lest it invert thee, deaden thee." Milton was far from being deadened; but in condition and operation his genius was inverted, so that what objectively appears evil in the demonic verse of *Paradise Lost* is subjectively good. And it is no wonder that the scene grew dark; no wonder, considering the power involved, that it became infernal with the reversal of the enchanting power, which, like the glimmering of those nightmare flames, made "darkness visible."

The subconscious reservoir of the barbaric past is by nature "evil"; epic genius "uses it for a well." It is a dark ocean; Milton, native to its storms, soars to the empyrean, while:

Birds of Calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.

But above the subconscious, there lies the exalted region, veiled by an unspeakable brightness; and into its awful sanctities the mind of Milton aspired, while his imagination, beating with its iron wings the

nether atmosphere, imagined an unreal heaven of harps and golden pavement.

The supraconscious works in the subconscious as energy, or joy ; and exultation in tragedy is heaven triumphant in hell. The profound darkness of the lower region is the shadow of the higher ; and its terrible creations are aspects and disguises of real things. It requires a greater even than the epic genius to portray heaven otherwise than in terms of hell. The soul of epic genius is in hell, *is* hell in the dynamic sense. Yet the flame of its torment is holy. It torments and ravagingly creates because its fire is of celestial derivation. It is the *Son of the Sun.*

CHAPTER IV

TWIN-MODES OF GENIUS

I

It is a remarkable coincidence, that while Shakespeare's individuality is in abeyance in his works, his life's history is little known. It is equally remarkable that Milton's personality is as plainly imprinted upon his works as his life has been in the pages of his biographers.

Shakespeare, experiencing that abnormal state which to ordinary men is accessible only in dreams, became a mere spectator of the drama of which he was actually the creator and controller. He was like a little child who becomes in imagination whatsoever character he pleases ; whose toys transcend in significant value what they represent ; he exhibits the real in what some psychologists call the " semblant mode of thought." He is not individually represented by any of his characters, but in his enchanted world his personality is lightly diffused, or held in solution, in the atmosphere, or element, of his imagination ; and in these his characters are mortals of superlative stature.

Milton entered the dream domain of his genius as a self-conscious artist : his characters became himself, not he his characters ; and the atmosphere of this subjective world was charged with a temperamental electricity in which all things condensed, dilated, and became indefinitely massive and grand. He, too, however, entered the kingdom of his genius as a little child, or he could not have entered it at all; but he brought into it the atmosphere of his Puritanical nursery, and the burden of that Hebraic conception of the Deity whose " wayes " he was to " justifie " to men.

It was, however, a modified conception. The Jewish seers had tempered its hardness with intuitions of compassion and love ; Oliver Cromwell subverted it to his political aims ; and, with his " Souldiers Pocket Bible "* in their knapsacks, his ignorant and inept fighting men became terrible to their enemies. Presently some of them became terrible to themselves, having developed a terrible conscience, a destroying righteousness, having, in Milton's classical phrase, made for themselves a " Razors Edge to walk on," and were terrified by " Panic Scruples and Amazements."

A heavy summons lay upon Milton in the production of *Paradise Lost*, which, as I have contended elsewhere, was the effect of a strange psychical

* " Containing the most (if not all) those places contained in holy Scripture, which doe shew the qualifications of his inner man, that is a fit Souldier to fight the Lords Battels," etc.

cause ; and in that it was a *task* it chastened the childlike spirit of his genius :

When I was yet a child, no childish play
To me was pleasing, all my mind was set
Serious.

Even in the character of Jesus the voice is Milton's, as it is also when Samson speaks :

Why was my breeding order'd and prescrib'd
As of a person separate to God,
Design'd for great exploits.

He can never get away from himself because he can never get away from his God and from his mission ; he must always be in the celestial light. But if, *in its subjective aspect*, this " God " is the shadow of himself projected and refracted like a subliminal Brocken Spectre on the opposite mist (and every *conception* of God must be no more—and no less !), that conception, anthropomorphic and personal though it be, is yet infinite, since the human personality is infinitely extensive, and Milton's aspiration, being sincere, was not closed either by convention or fear, by indifference or faintness of heart. Love " casts out fear " ; but awe knows no fear, and, however incongruous it may seem, *charity* in the Pauline sense is related to the sense of sublimity or of awe. Milton possessed both charity and awe, as is seen in his writings on divorce. He was not afraid to " pierce " with his " free Thoughts into the full Latitude of Nature and Religion."

His "God" was yet a conception and an impression, not an illusion. If he did not regard his genius as a mirror in the Shakespearean sense, he certainly desired that it should be as a "mirror or glass," in Bacon's sense, taking "illumination from the foreknowledge of God and spirits"; and whatever rays impinged thereon, and however "clear and equal," or "enchanted" with error, it may have been, he kept it continually directed upon the heavens, and what he saw in, or through, that glass vitalized his life and work with a controlling gladness and devotion.

Yet he is not to be classed with the mystics, although he might be called an idealist in politics. He never attained even "something like Prophetic strain," except in his writings on divorce. He was a synthetic poet, a shaping and personifying absolutist, in love with objective attributes and essences that were enchanted by the subjective forms with which his love englobed them. Thus, and not as mere abstractions, he loved truth, beauty, goodness, liberty, and, as their source and synthesis, *God*.

He was neither an aristocrat, like Nietzsche, nor a democrat, like Karl Marx; but he was an aristocrat rather than a democrat—or rather, he was both an aristocrat and a democrat, since he regarded men as generically noble. The religious and political liberty that he demanded was external liberty for a people who were already the morally and spiritually enfranchised citizens of an ideal State. In some

respects this idealism was extravagant. Thus, his educational curriculum was only suited to the capacities of boy-geniuses, and in the church he would have extempore instead of formal prayers, as if every man had eloquence and inspiration at his command.

The exalted buoyancy of his temperament was not exempt from overclouding and storms. Idealism has its torments, which, if it be out of touch with reality, take the form of shadowy superstitions, or, on the personal, selfish side, "idle fancies." If of the communal kind, however, it is subject to daunting forebodings. Milton, who, I think, had both encountered and overcome the former, found himself in the toils of the latter when he was precipitated into that tremendous Armada passage beginning: "O, Sir, I do now feel myself inwrapt on the sudain into those Mazes and Labyrinths of dreadful and hideous Thoughts, that which way to get out, or which way to end I know not, unless I turn mine eyes, and . . . lift up my Hands to the Eternal and Propitious Throne;" and again, in Satan's apostrophe to the sun, with its horrible imagination of deeps opening in deeps.

His religious ideas were adaptations, or rather transmutations. Yet he was a mystic in the sense that he loved men through God, not God through men, but not conjointly as is the fashion of the complete mystic. He laboured for men collectively as the creatures and property of God, and

for Englishmen in particular—at least, before the break-up of the Commonwealth—as the favourites of God, the modern chosen people.

The man of genius is the expression of a concrete unity, just as his creations are universals as well as individuals, types as well as personalities. The most representative man is also the most individualistic man, being enfranchised from the fallacy of a particular good and spiritual tariffs. His enfranchisement, however, may be one of two kinds, the latter of which is on a lower plane, and in a sense partial. He may have attained to the intense serenity of *selflessness* (which teleologically is *self-realization*), or to the storm and precipitance of public devotion, of unselfish absorption in social causes. He may contemplate and engage in the action of the world with intuitive faith, or see it through clouds and await the issue of events with hope and fear. The former state corresponds to the heart of a cyclone, the latter to its skirt. The sublimity of the mystic is apparent only to the seer ; the passage of the great soul in contact with the friction of the atmosphere of the earth is evident, after a period, to all men. It is needless to say in which of these states was Milton whom public disappointments moved so deeply.

The former state would naturally produce works of mystical genius, such as the Book of Revelation ; but in the New Testament, as in the characters of the Patriarchs and all universals, there is a synthesis

of the human and divine, of *humour* (or *humane insight*) and sublimity.

Milton was free intellectually, without sophistical compoundings, such, for instance, as the quaint devices of Sir Thomas Browne. Although he seems to have regarded the Bible as infallible, yet if any text clashed, or seemed to clash, with his contention, he soon cleared the way of the obstacle, putting it summarily "under the Feet of Charity." Charity, indeed, and the power of prayer, were his lantern and his mighty engine, and, if he had been weak in adopting the Hebraico-Puritan conception of religion, he never came under the rigours of its power; but, running free before the wind of emotion, he was capable of such *naïvetés* as imploring the Deity to perfect His acts of deliverance in England lest His "great name would suffer," reminding Him, almost in the style of a friend, that "men may leave their works unfinished," but that He is "a God"!

So bold an attitude ought to have produced in Milton a correspondingly excellent temper of toleration; but he encountered in the religious field more tangible obstacles than the shadowy chains of superstition that he pleaded against in his divorce writings with fervid compassion; and, just as the humanism of a man like Swift was incensed into lambent or coarse satire by the religious and patriotic pretensions of bellicose nationalism, so Milton's compassion for his fellows under the prelates' yoke condensed and changed into fiery polemic

and scurrilous invective at the spectacle of the arrogant and blatant ecclesiastical masquerade. Embattling under the banners of *Zeal* in the electric atmosphere of the Reformation, which he breathed as a kind of fifth element, he saw the bishops, as later on he beheld the presbyters, with the intensity of a partisan, and raged against them with a fury which afterwards sublimated in the first book of *Paradise Lost*; while in his tractate *Of True Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration*, he bans the papist much as the decretals delivered on Rabelais' "Island of Papefigues" exempts the heretic from the "furnace of love and charity towards one's neighbour" and exposes none but him to "war, murder, and assassination"! Milton does not, however, advocate personal severity: "Are we," he says, "to punish them by corporal Punishment, or Fines in their Estates, upon Account of their Religion? I suppose, it stands not with the Clemency of the Gospel, more then what appertains to the Security of the State."

Thus, on this ground his sublimity was provoked into opposition; whereas the toleration of such a humanist as Montaigne is everywhere maintained; and Sir Thomas Browne, whose humour is richly and strangely blended with sublimity, could not "laugh at, but rather pity, the fruitless journeys of Pilgrims, or contemn the miserable condition of Fryars." For him "Silence and dumb contempt" at the tolling of the "Ave-Mary Bell," or "scorn and

laughter " at a " solemn Procession " was the proof of spiritual failure. Nor, indeed, had Coleridge ridiculed the uncouth statue of Christ, as Dr. Carlyon says he did, before the German peasant, even with " good humoured effrontery," if he had realized intellectually the beauty of Roman Catholic symbology, which in his poems he imaginatively expresses, but had rather " cast an eye upon the soul." He was no iconoclast of imperfect images in religion, any more than he was a contemner of ugly bodies in life ; not beguiled, like a ritualist, by symbols in religion, or like a sensualist, by symbols in life, understanding that the function of genius is to reveal the secret and essential beauty of real things.

On the subject of martyrdom, Sir Thomas Browne writes :

" I think my conscience will not give me the lye, if I say there are not many extant that in a noble way fear the face of death less than myself ; yet, from the moral duty I owe to the Commandment of God . . . I would not perish upon a Ceremony, Politick points, or indifferency ; nor is my belief of that untractible temper, as not to bow at their obstacles, or connive at matters wherein there are not manifest impieties : The leaven therefore and ferment of all, not only Civil, but Religious action, is Wisdom. . . ."

Anatole France, in his pleasant disquisitions on life and letters, runs to the furthest limit of *humour* —and beyond! Sir Thomas Browne praises Socrates,

" that suffered on a fundamental point of Religion, the Unity of God " ; M. France praises Rabelais because he " maintained his opinions, but not up to the burning point, reckoning in advance of and with Montaigne, that to die for an idea is to put a very high value on one's opinions. Martyrdom must be left to those who, not knowing how to doubt, have in their very simplicity the excuse for their pig-headedness. It seems presumptuous to get burnt for an opinion. Martyrs are lacking in irony. . . ."

But irony in the French sense (Rabelais-*cum*-Montaigne-*cum*-France) which refuses to receive anything seriously and laughs away sublime verities, is an intellectual martyrdom, a voluntary confinement in a mock monastery, and is as mistaken as the martyrdom of Browne's " miserable Bishop that suffered in the cause of *Antipodes*." The great martyrs were egotists in the sublime sense ; but this kind of irony is the abnegation of the soul, the denial and confusion of values, the annihilation of life. Thus, indeed, humour, no less than sublimity, in decline, tends towards pessimism and death.

" Charity " was Milton's corrective, as " Wisdom" was that of Sir Thomas ; and here sublime and humane genius meet in the sublimate of " sweet reasonableness," for, indeed, they are fundamentally one. And religion was no Puritanical system of inhibitions to Milton any more than it was to Sir Thomas Browne, who was constitutionally a Catholic. The " ways of God," writes Milton, " are not

burdensome nor do they ever cross the just and reasonable Desires of Men." He was only restricted by the ways of men, refraining, like every man of sense, from offending against the canons of convention.

In this sense he was a precursor of modernism; and in comparing him with Dante, it must be remembered that in his case the revolution in intellect and feeling which we call Renaissance and Reformation had intervened. His treatment of his theme in *Paradise Lost* is impressionist. His Hell, as Macaulay shows, contained immeasurable extensions, whilst Dante's *Inferno* is precisely measured; and his characters—the vast projections of his genius and his passion—are abstract as well as personal. Their sublimity was conceived by saturation in the Hebraic theology that shaped and coloured the religious thought of his times, which—at least, in its subjective aspect—was itself a tremendous sublimation and projection of a tribal egotism. He embodied the Jewish spirit in *Paradise Lost*, as in the form of *Samson Agonistes* he closely imitated the Athenians. He fell short of his original, as he was bound to do. "I affirm," writes Coleridge, "that after reading Isaiah, or St. Paul's 'Epistle to the Hebrews,' Homer and Virgil are disgustingly *tame* to me, and Milton himself barely tolerable."

In Dante the essence of sublimity was precipitated in *material mass*, just as in the absolutist metaphysicians of Germany it became *abstraction*. As

to its abstraction in music, one may compare the current controversy between the absolutist or objective school of music, and the sentimental or subjective.

II

Shakespeare manifested the genius of *humour* or *genial insight*, Milton that of *sublimity*. I would propose, as a tenable theory, that these two manifestations of poetic faculty are exhaustive of its nature; not, indeed, in the sense of being contradictory aspects, but rather subsisting modes capable of fusion—as they are fused, for example, in Macbeth's presentation of pity as a "naked new-born babe, striding the blast." (The origin of this image, too, is in the Old Testament, in Isaiah's "A little child shall lead them," as it is afterwards expressed in St. Paul's "I am made perfect in weakness.") And this fusion is a higher synthesis of the operation whereby poetry becomes symbol and truth paradox. That a babe should be positively terrible to Macbeth in the prospect of his crime, just as after its commission he was unable to pronounce "Amen," or that in actual life a criminal should shrink in the consciousness of his guilt from the eyes of a little child, were foolishness to the logical judgment.

A similar idea is at least unintentionally conveyed at the close of the fourth book of *Paradise Lost*,

where the image of a cornfield symbolizes terror. After suprising Satan in the Garden of Eden :

> th' Angelic Squadron bright
> Turnd fierie red, sharpning in mooned hornes
> Thir Phalanx, and began to hemm him round
> With ported Spears, as thick as when a field
> Of Ceres ripe for harvest waving bends
> Her bearded Grove of ears, which way the wind
> Swayes them ; the careful Plowman doubting stands
> Least on the threshing floore his hopeful sheaves
> Prove chaff. On th'other side Satan allarm'd
> Collecting all his might dilated stood,
> Like Teneriff or Atlas unremov'd :
> His stature reacht the Skie, and on his Crest
> Sat horror Plum'd.

How kinetic is the idea of the harmless, goodly corn as a symbol of terror, with its hint of the awful quality of peace !—a hint that temporarily breaks the spell of the presentation of Satan as the Promethean protagonist of Fate. But soon this spell returns ; and we imagine, not the surprised and conscience-alarmed felon, but that terrific figure, ringed like a solitary rebel with the mechanical and multitudinous spears of Law and Might, towering dilated, self-collected, at bay, with the hair upstanding as the grey plume of a volcano upon its crest !

It was strange after quoting this passage with its

imagery of spears and a cornfield, followed, as it is, by the apparition of the golden scales, to read in a poet of to-day :

> Justice, the Virgin, rules here : in her lap
> Sits the world's hope : and shine in either hand
> The Scales of Judgment and the Spear that is
> A golden spear of corn, a Spike of Peace.*

These twin-modes of poetic genius, sublimity and humour, provide the two main avenues of escape from egotism (in the bad sense) which so easily besets men of genius and is most deadly to them. " Genius," writes Coleridge, " may co-exist with wildness, idleness, folly, even with crime, but not long, believe me, with selfishness and the indulgence of an envious disposition." With this one may compare Mr. Yeats' comment upon Blake's conception of " forgiveness : that it is the forgiveness of one who has discovered that without a perfect sympathy, there is no perfect imagination." Selfishness is vanity in the sense of emptiness as well as of self-conceit : to be centred exclusively in the personal self is (to use an electrical term) to set up a wasteful " local circuit " in the battery of life.

Coleridge has also indicated the operations of humane and sublime genius :

" While Shakespeare darts himself forth, and

* *A Schoolmaster in Picardy*, by Henry Bryan Binns. (Jonathan Cape.)

passes into all the forms of human character and passion, the one Proteus of the fire and flood ; the other " (Milton) " attracts all forms and things to himself, into the unity of his own *ideal.* All things and modes of action shape themselves anew in the being of *Milton* ; while *Shakespeare* becomes all things, yet for ever remaining himself." (So, too, one may mention the parallel comparison between Schiller and Goethe as types of sublimity and the equable.) Thus, the awareness of space in Milton goes with an intensive, as Shakespeare's inner feeling with an extensive magnitude—the result that one would the least expect.

I have called humour and sublimity the two *main* avenues of escape, because there is a third—the psychical drunkenness of incantation, as practised, for instance, by Poe and by Coleridge himself ; but it is fallacious as a means of spiritual freedom, and incurs great misery. " Mercy ! Mercy ! " cried Coleridge, and Poe : " Lord have mercy on my unhappy soul ! "

While sublimity and humour are capable of union, they are also subject to be broken up and diffused into new forms. They collapsed in England in the sensuality of the Restoration lyrists, whose sugared conceits might be regarded as artificial flowers offered at their obsequies. The subconscious mould—the macrocosm, of which genius is the microcosm—was jarred and distempered, and the division between intellect and emotion was

increased, after they had attained approximate union in the Elizabethan era, as manifest in Shakespeare. This approximate union, however, was already tending towards change ; and the energy of Bacon provided the *élan*. In Milton intellect appeared in the form of abstruse speculation ; but, as he lived before the *Flood*, this did not entail, as did Coleridge's plunge into metaphysics, the suspension of poetic power. (It was Milton's intellectual proclivity, by the way, that provoked Blake, the Man of Imagination, to include him in the same condemnation with Bacon and Newton.) It did, however, occasion his contradiction and pain ; for intensively developed intellect becomes a scathing frost, while, on the other side, emotion sinks into an elemental fire, emitting various flames of glamour and horror : the result is a kind of psychological volcano, whose forces are generated by the sea, many thousands of feet above which it towers, snow-capped, to the sky.

After the *débâcle* that followed the Restoration, and the quiescence and urbanity of the Queen Anne period, sublimity reappeared diversely in the natural, and later in the transcendental philosophers, and in the various phases of the Romantic Movement. It was involved notably in the strange genius of Hardenberg and Tieck, by whom, as Coleridge showed, Scott was inspired, as also was Coleridge himself ; and humour was born again, earlier than sublimity, in the social and psychological

novel, which in our time has attained such a refinement of subtlety.

The work of such men as Tieck and Poe betrays regret for a ruined beauty, a consciousness of faded glory ; and this also modifies the genius of Coleridge. Thus the *Ancient Mariner* is suffused with sultry colours and phosphorescent tints, intensified by the solitudinous gloom ; and *Christabel* is eerie with witch-light ; while *Kubla Khan* contains such a morbid oxymoron as " holy and enchanted " to describe the savage trysting-place of a woman and her demon lover. In Poe's *Haunted Palace* the native nostalgia is directly expressed :

> And round about his home the glory
> That blushed and bloomed,
> Is but a dim-remembered story
> Of the old time entombed.

It was, perhaps, with some such consciousness of sublimity in ruin, and sense of irremediable loss, that, as a contemporary of Poe records, this melancholy genius asseverated, with an access of almost demoniac pride, the eternal subsistence of his personality.

In French literature sublimity is far to seek ; but it clearly inspires the dynamic and grotesque imaginations of Victor Hugo, who, achieving a synthesis of sublimity and humour comparable with the New Testament, in kind, but not, of course, in degree, has made self-sacrifice romantic. I refer,

of course, to his *Les Misérables* and *Les Travailleurs de la Mer.*

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is as dynamic in its kind as *Paradise Lost,* and Heathcliff is half goblin, half fiend.

I pass to some considerations on Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Poe as a trinity of genius and gloom—a gloom inherited, no doubt, from the Puritans of New England. In Walt Whitman, a fourth American genius, sublimity was transformed in a vast and robust personality by deliberate Hegelian abstraction. In Poe it was transmuted into analysis and horror; but he exhibited as much as Milton its three main characteristics: all his characters are embodiments of himself; he was almost devoid of a "sense of humour" in the usual meaning of the words; he showed a predilection for material mass and distension, as in the prodigious swollen ship of his *MS. Found in a Bottle* and the gigantic antarctic figure in the *Adventures of Arthur Gordon Pym,* which concludes:

"But there arose in our pathway a shrouded human figure, very far larger in its proportions than any dweller among men. And the hue of the skin of the figure was of the perfect whiteness of the snow."

How strikingly we are reminded here of Melville's chapter on the "Horror of Whiteness"!

Nathaniel Hawthorne is a writer whom the lonely and gloomy would do well to avoid. He is

depressing, being the very antithesis of Milton, whose *Satan* is a child of wrath and indignation; an insurgent reaction in the world of imagination—even in hell! In Hawthorne the quality of the sublime is passive and introspective. His morbid genius sees all things, like his "veiled minister," through a shroud of crape; and the subtle blight that he diffuses infects the very sunshine with a spectral gloom, which in his Saturnalia of the Black Sabbath condenses and breaks into horror.

In all works of genius which, in the sense of this essay, possess any strain of sublimity, the background is gloom; just as the mind of Michael Angelo, that Milton of sculpture, was "eternal storm and night." This is clearly indicated in the sinister figure of the *Master of Ballantrae*, which appears in vivid prominence against such a background. Sublimity is conceived in trouble, as it is the bringer of trouble to him who reveals it. "Wo is me, my mother," is his plaint, "that thou hast borne me a man of strife and contention"; and this is true of nations as well as of individuals, as the Semitic and the Teutonic races testify. It is, indeed, inevitably so, by reason of the disturbing quality of sublimity itself, which irritates by its strangeness; for men, like birds and schoolboys, hate what they do not understand, especially if the not-understood, or the dimly apprehended, proceeds from a superior plane. Also, as I have said in my preliminary essays, it irritates by the egotistic form, in the

larger sense of the word, which it naturally assumes in the individual or national character.

The *Satan* of *Paradise Lost* is not a figure of darkness, any more than he is a figure of weakness or misery. It is only the background that is aboriginally dark. But in Hawthorne the gloom had entered the foreground; so that in the *Scarlet Letter* he achieved what Milton and Dante attempted in vain, an imagination of hell (which, like the "kingdom of heaven," is internal) inhabited by those "lost souls," the guilty Minister and his fiendish tormentor. "When the inward has become the outward," according to one of the "Sayings of Jesus," "the kingdom of heaven will have come on earth." In Hawthorne's case the reverse had occurred. It is characteristic of the passive state of his sublimity, as distinguished from the dynamic genius of Milton, that his conception of material mass is inanimate, as in his *Great Stone Face*; while Poe's stupendous ship that *grew* in the waters, is the symbol of an intermediate state. Poe's faculty, indeed, is neither dynamic and tragic, nor static and depressing; it is interposed, as the lyric is interposed between the epic and the dramatic.

Herman Melville, for all his exuberant style, might be entitled the "Hawthorne of the Sea." Although his *Typee* and other Pacific romances are free from the New England gloom, it certainly tinges his great work *Moby Dick*, which is inscribed to Hawthorne, but is inspired by the glamour of the

monstrous, the portentous, and the mysterious, symbolized by the *Great White Whale*, " one grand hooded phantom, like a snow hill in the air," and by the " everlasting itch for things remote," which lured him to " sail forbidden seas, and land on barbarous coasts." " Not ignoring what is good," he was " quick to perceive a horror, and could still be social with it " ; but his philosophy is strangely out of keeping with his " social " style, which, I suppose, corresponds to the sun that " hides not the ocean, which is the dark side of this earth, and which is two-thirds of this earth." Therefore, he argues, a man who has " more of joy than sorrow in him," is either not true, or else undeveloped. " There is a wisdom that is woe ; but there is a woe which is madness."

The woe of his *Captain Ahab* is dynamic with madness, demonic with pride, outrageous with revenge, and is symbolized by the "Three Andes' Summits" on an Ecuador coin: "from one a flame; a tower on another ; on the third a crowing cock." " The firm tower, that is Ahab ; the volcano, that is Ahab ; the courageous, the undaunted, and victorious fowl, that, too, is Ahab."

We feel that Melville in his sea-epic utters chaotically what Hawthorne subtly diffuses and Poe distils, what Milton, with Roman concentration and Hellenic restraint, expresses in his final work—a *radical disappointment.*

The end, as in *Samson,* is calm, "all passion spent."

CHAPTER V

ZEAL AND STYLE

"ZEAL, whose substance is Æthereal, arming in complcat Diamond ascends his fiery Chariot drawn with two blazing *Meteors* figur'd like Beasts, but of a higher Breed then any the *Zodiac* yeilds, resembling two of those four which *Ezekiel* and *S. John* saw, the one visag'd like a Lion to express Power, high Authority, and Indignation, the other of Countenance like a Man to cast Derision and Scorn upon perverse and fraudulent Seducers. . . ."

In the hurried writing of his polemical works, Milton looked forward to "such a Subject as the publishing whereof might be delay'd at Pleasure, and time enough to pencil it over with all the curious Touches of Art, even to the Perfection of a faultless Picture." Yet he was most successful in immediate sublimation :

> headlong themselvs they threw
> Down from the verge of Heav'n, *Eternal wrauth*
> *Burnt after them to the bottomless pit.*

And the words that I have marked by italics portray the very quality of his style in its aspect of zeal. For, being of all poets the most fervid and sensitive,

the frustration of his ideals, and this just when he thought that they would be realized, made bitter stuff in his spirit, that by a rare transmutation fed the flames of no personal spleen, but, eondensed with a sort of mineral fury, erupted so that his impetuous style seems to be moulded out in its channels as by streaming lava. He was a voleano of the spirit, and his wrath was only the other side of the "noblest jealousy," a "well heated fervency" for truth and humanity. In the colossal Armada passage in his *Of Reformation* the precipitation is deliberate.

In his *Animadversions upon the Remonstrant's Defence*, Milton's anger burns lowering grim in a jeering eoarse eolloquy. Suddenly there oeeurs the phenomenon that Maeaulay notieed, when "his feelings, exeited by eonflict, find a vent in bursts of devotional and lyrie rapture." The whole splendid passage reads :

"O if we freeze at Noon after their early thaw, let us fear lest the Sun for ever hide himself, and turn his orient steps from our ingratful Horizon, justly eondemned to be eternally benighted. Whieh dreadful Judgment, O thou the ever-begotten Light and perfeet image of the Father ! intereede, may never eome upon us, as we trust thou hast ; for thou hast opened our diffieult and sad times, and given us an unexpeeted breathing after our long oppressions : thou hast done justiee upon those that tyranizd over us, while some men wavered and

admired a vain shadow of wisdom in a tongue nothing slow to utter guile, though thou hast taught us to admire only that which is good, and to count that only praise-worthy, which is grounded upon thy divine Precepts. Thou hast discovered the plots, and frustrated the hopes, of all the wicked in the land, and put to shame the persecutors of thy Church : thou hast made our false Prophets to be found a lie in the sight of all the People, and chased them with sudden confusion and amazement before the redoubled brightness of thy descending cloud, that now covers thy Tabernacle.

" Who is there that cannot trace thee now in thy beamy Walk through the midst of thy Sanctuary, amidst those golden Candlesticks, which have long suffered a dimness amongst us through the violence of those that had seized them, and were more taken with the mention of their gold than of their starry Light, teaching the doctrine of Balaam, to cast a stumbling-block before thy servants, commanding them to eat things sacrificed to idols, and forcing them to fornication ? Come therefore, O thou that hast the seven stars in thy right hand, appoint thy chosen Priests according to their orders and courses of old, to minister before thee, and duly to press and pour out the consecrated oil into thy holy and everburning lamps. Thou hast sent out the spirit of prayer upon thy servants over all the Land to this effect, and stirred up their vows as the sound of many waters about thy Throne. Every

one can say, that now certainly thou hast visited this Land, and hast not forgotten the utmost corners of the Earth, in a time when men had thought that thou wast gone up from us to the furthest end of the Heavens, and hadst left to do marvellously among the sons of these last Ages. O perfect and accomplish thy glorious acts ! for men may leave their works unfinished, but thou art a God, thy Nature is Perfection : shouldst thou bring us thus far onward from Egypt to destroy us in this wilderness, though we deserve, yet thy great name would suffer in the Rejoycing of thine enemies, and the deluded hope of all thy servants. When thou hast settled Peace in the Church, and righteous judgment in the kingdom, then shall all thy saints address their voices of joy and triumph to thee, standing on the Shore of that Red Sea into which our enemies had almost driven us. And he that now for haste snatches up a plain ungarnished present as a Thank-offering to thee, which could not be deferred in regard of thy so many late Deliverances wrought for us one upon another, may then perhaps take up a Harp, and sing thee an elaborate song to generations. In that day it shall no more be said as in scorn, this or that was never held so till this present age, when men have better learnt that the times and seasons pass along under thy feet to go and come at thy bidding : and as thou didst dignify our fathers' days with many revelations above all the foregoing ages, since thou tookest the Flesh ;

so thou eanst vouchsafe to us (though unworthy) as large a portion of thy Spirit as thou pleasest : for who shall prejudiee thy all-governing Will ? seeing the power of thy graee is not passed away with the primitive times, as fond and faithless men imagine, but thy Kingdom is now at hand, and thou standing at the Door. Come forth out of thy Royal Chambers, O Prinee of all the kings of the earth ! put on the visible robes of thy imperial majesty, take up that unlimited Seeptre which thy Almighty Father hath bequeathed thee ; for now the voiee of thy Bride calls thee, and all ereatures sigh to be renewed."

The *Apology for Smectymnuus* is as various in attack as a Catiline oration ; and, indeed, Milton was much influenced by Cieero. But it is far more various in form. It is nervous, witty, and quaint, and is exuberant with a plangent raillery like the ehaff of a bullying schoolboy. Milton disports himself as in a sea, which under a lowering sky, reflects the austere eharm of his earlier poems ; a youthful glory which became mature in his *Areopagitica*, and thence in the later prose works changed to the cloudy darkness, or sublimity, of night that was the sanctuary of his spirit and genius. He employs every artifiee of style, dialeetie, and debate, with eopious eloqùenee moving freely and lightly in changing modes, so that the phraseology seems at onee statie and mobile like a "sea of wax." My quotations, unfortunately, must be brief :

" And so he goes on mincing the Matter, till he meets with something in Sir *Francis Bacon*, then he takes Heart again, and holds his *Major* at large. But by and by as soon as the Shadow of Sir *Francis* hath left him, he falls off again warping and warping till he come to contradict himself in Diameter."

" And so I leave you and your Fellow *stars*, as you term them, *of either Horizon*, meaning, I suppose, either *Hemisphere*, unless you will be ridiculous in your Astronomy. For the rational *Horizon* in Heaven is but one, and the sensible *Horizons* in Earth are innumerable ; so that your Allusion was as erroneous as your Stars. But that you did well to prognosticate them all at lowest in the *Horizon*, that is either seeming bigger then they are through the Mist and Vapour, which they raise, or else sinking, and wasted to the Snuff in their *Western* Socket."

The outward form of Milton's satire in this work, as in others of his polemical writings, is more striking than the arguments, from which it distracts the mind. Sometimes, indeed, they are mere verbal twists and flash-lights. But what an inversion is this ! " *Such a Volley of Expressions*, he hath met withal," writes Milton, quoting an unexpected acknowledgment of his adversary, " *as he would never desire to have them better cloth'd.* For me, Readers, although I cannot say that I am utterly untrain'd in those Rules which best Rhetoricians

have given, or unacquainted with those Examples which the prime Authors of Eloquence have written in any learned Tongue, yet true Eloquence I find to be none, but the serious and hearty Love of Truth : and that whose Mind so ever is fully possest with a fervent Desire to know good Things, and with the dearest Charity to infuse the Knowledge of them into others, when such a Man would speak his Words, (by what I can express) like so many nimble and airy Servitors, trip about him at Command, and in well-order'd Files, as he would wish, fall aptly into their own Places." Again, he writes :

" For doubtless that indeed according to art is most eloquent, which turns and approaches nearest to nature, from whence it came ; and they express nature best, who in their lives least wander from her safe leading, which may be called regenerate reason. So that how he should be truly eloquent who is not withal a good man, I see not."*

And in his *Defensio Secunda* :

" to the praise of eloquence, except as far as eloquence consists in the force of truth, I lay no claim."

These are significant pronouncements bearing

* As in so many other instances in Milton, the thought is derived : " If men will impartially and not asquint look toward the offices and function of a poet, they will easily conclude to themselves the impossibility of any man's being a great poet without being first a good man."—*Ben Jonson's Dedication to " Volpone."*

Οὐκ οἷον ἀγαθὸν γενέσθαι ποιητὴν, μὴ πρότερον γενηθέντα ἄνδρα ἀγαθόν.—*Strabo, lib. i.*

upon a point of perennial controversy ; and I may cite a contemporary equivalent. The following, quoted from a review in the *Daily News*, describes the baiting of an Australian professor who had come to Anatole France to discover the secret source of genius :

" Nothing that he has trusted in survives—not style, and not imagination ; not arrangement, no ! nor skill in composition. To the slaughter all great writers flock : Rabelais, Molière, Balzac, Shakespeare, Swift, Cervantes, Dante. . . . The Master looks at him ironically. Then he relents. He will disclose the secret : ' The great writers have no pettiness of soul. That is their secret. They deeply love their fellow-creatures. They are generous. They keep their hearts wide open. They compassionate all suffering. They labour to appease it. They have pity on the helpless actors who are playing in the comic tragedy, or tragic comedy, of Destiny. Pity, then, my dear Professor, is the very fount of genius.' "*

Bacon and Goethe, with their insistence on compassion as the proof and measure of greatness, might also have joined the " slaughter " ; and Coleridge has observed how inevitably selfish egotism will gradually constrict and kill genius. Certainly the great artist is not an æsthete ; yet among the aspersions cast upon Milton, is the implication

* *Les Matinées de la Villa Saïd : propos d'Anatole France.* Recueillis par Paul Gsell. (Grasset.)

that he was. In his *Reason of Church Government* he develops his position at a great height :

" These Abilities, wheresoever they be found, are the inspired Gift of God rarely bestow'd, but yet to some (though most abuse) in every Nation : And are of Power beside the Office of a Pulpit, to inbreed and cherish in a great People the Seeds of Vertue and publie Civility, to allay the Perturbations of the Mind, and set the Affections in right Tune, to celebrate in glorious and lofty Hymns, the Throne and Equipage of Gods Almightiness and what he Works and what he Suffers to be wrought with high Providence in his Church, to sing the victorious Agonies of Martyrs and Saints, the Deeds and Triumphs of just and pious Nations doing valiantly through Faith against the Enemies of Christ, to deplore the general Relapses of Kingdoms and States from Justice and Gods true Worship. *Lastly*, whatsoever in Religion is Holy and Sublime, in Vertue Amiable, or Grave, whatsoever hath Passion or Admiration in all the Changes of that which is call'd Fortune from without, or the wisely Suttleties and Refluxes of Mans Thoughts from within, all these things with a solid and treatable Smoothness to paint out and describe."

And the epic poem that he would compose, could only be achieved by " devout Prayer to that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with all Utterance and Knowledge, and sends out his Seraphim with the hallow'd Fire of his Altar to touch and purify the Lips of whom he pleases."

To this, however, must be added "industrious and select Reading, steady Observation, Insight into all seemly and generous Arts and Affairs."

Both in prose and verse Milton abounds in metaphors and similes, being in this respect very unlike the Athenians with their natural realism; but his images, for the most part, are integral and not empty gauds, necessary to "convey the meaning" in the sense of Confucius, who adds: "Ornament is as substance, substance as ornament. The hide of a tiger, or leopard, stripped of its hair, is like the hide of a dog, or goat, stripped of its hair." With which crucial observation I may couple Mr. Orage's: "It is not the meaning of the *Words* that counts for immortality, but the meaning of the *style*. Style . . . is a kind of super-meaning. In great writing there is always a temporal and an eternal value. That Milton's pamphlets are 'unreadable' to his present posterity is no slight upon them, but upon us."

In proceeding with another quotation from the satirical *Apology*, I must, in my author's words, "be wary, unless I can provide against offending the Ear, as some Musicians are wont skilfully to fall out of one Key into another, without Breach of Harmony." The passage touches upon the common practice of the didactic and controversial writers of resorting to marginal glosses, which, in another place, Milton calls cutting out "docks and creeks" to unlade a "foolish frigate."

" For what with putting his Fancy to the Tiptoe in this Description of himself, and what with adventuring presently to stand upon his own Legs without the Crutches of his Margent, which is the Sluce most commonly that feeds the Drought of his Text, he comes so lazily on in a Simile with his *Arm full of Weeds*, and demeans himself in the dull Expression so like a dough-kneaded Thing, that he has not Spirit enough left him so far to look to his Syntaxis as to avoid Nonsense."

It is curious that Milton, who elsewhere sometimes drags and plunges in turgid phraseology, in much of this work moves so lightly. Sometimes, indeed, the style is as modern as that of Robert Louis Stevenson :

" There while they acted and over-acted, among other young Scholars, I was a Spectator ; they thought themselves gallant Men, and I thought them Fools, they made Sport, and I laugh'd, they mispronounc'd, and I mislik'd, and to make up the *Atticism*, they were out, and I hiss'd."

His periods in other works are, indeed, characteristically long (one of his sentences must surely be the longest in English) ; for he had an aversion from short sentences, ridiculing " one who makes sentences by the Statute, as if all above three inches long were confiscate," who, he says in another place, " will bestow on us a pretty Model of himself ; and sobs me out half a dozen Tizical Mottoes, where ever he had them, hopping short, in the Measure of

Convulsion-fits ; in which Labour the Agony of his Wit, having scap'd narrowly, instead of well siz'd Periods, he greets us with a Quantity of Thumb-ring Posies." A stricture that has been made upon his ample style in general on this account, is, however, very unjust, and appears to be due to a professorial defect of ear ; for he can fill his great sails, going superbly before the wind ; although many pages are rough and slovenly, written, in his phrase, as with his left hand, when the nerve of zest failed him in the hurry and fatigue of the work to which his conscience drove him.

He had small expectation of zest in starting his prose writings, leaving a " calm and pleasing Solitariness fed with chearful and confident Thoughts, to imbark in a troubl'd Sea of Noises and hoarse Disputes " ; and this the less, in that he carried a precious cargo " of such an orient Lustre as no Diamond can equal," since he knew well under what conditions the merchandise of heaven must be vended, with what crabbed and squalid contact with the " great Merchants of this World " and their sycophants, their paid scribes and bullies, and the " whole noise of timorous and flocking birds " that come screeching and gabbling their obscene cacophonies whenever any lamp of truth shines forth upon the waters of such a tumultuous sea.

CHAPTER VI

PHILOSOPHY OF DIVORCE

MILTON'S *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, which was written with extraordinary speed after his first wife had deserted him, is a marvel of eloquence and style and the tenderest, loftiest, most passionate composition in English. It has the same grace and persuasive quality as the *Areopagitica*, and, as in that work, fierce and satirical invective is absent from its wistful or agonized pages.

He entreats his auditory to be "still, and hear all out . . . remembering this, that many Truths now of reverend esteem and credit, had their birth and beginning once from singular and private thoughts . . . and had the fate at first to be generally exploded and exclaim'd on by many violent opposers." He "undertakes the cure of an inveterate disease crept into the best part of Human Society: and to do this with no smarting corrosive, but with a smooth and pleasing Lesson, which receiv'd hath the vertue to soften and dispel rooted and knotty sorrows." He pleads that "Indisposition, unfitness, or contrariety of mind, arising from a cause in Nature unchangeable, hindring, and ever likely to

hinder the main Benefits of conjugal society which are solace and peace," is a much greater cause for divorce than the grounds on which it was, and still is, permitted ; and he implies that those who think otherwise are lacking in imagination.

" As no Man," he writes, " apprehends what Vice is so well as he who is truly Vertuous, no Man knows Hell like him who converses most in Heaven, so there is none that can estimate the Evil and the Affliction of a Natural Hatred in Matrimony, unless he have a Soul gentle enough and spacious enough to contemplate what is true Love." And the " pure and more inbred desire of joyning to itself in conjugal fellowship a fit conversing soul (which desire is properly called love) is stronger than Death. . . ." an " intelligible flame " which becomes " more ardent by being fail'd of what in reason it lookt for." " Certainly such a one " (who is frustrate of this desire) " forbidden to Divorce, is in effect forbidden to marry."

" When, therefore, this original and sinless Penury, or Loneliness of the soul, cannot lay itself down by the side of such a meet and acceptable union as God ordain'd in Marriage, at least in some proportion, it cannot conceive and bring forth Love. . . . Then enters Hate, not the Hate that sins, but that which only is natural dissatisfaction and the turning aside from a mistaken object : He therefore who lacking of his due in the most native and human end of Marriage, thinks it better to part

than to live sadly and injuriously to that chearful Cov'nant (for not to be belov'd and yet retain'd is the greatest injury to a gentle Spirit) . . . is one who highly honours the Married life and would not stain it."

"But some are ready to object, that the disposition ought seriously to be consider'd before. But let them know again, that for all the wariness can be us'd, it may yet befal a discreet Man to be mistak'n in his choice, and we have plenty of Examples. The sobcrest and best govern'd Men are least practised in these affairs; and who knows not that the bashful muteness of a Virgin may oft-times hide all the unliveliness and natural sloth which is really unfit for Conversation . . . it is not strange though many who have spent their youth chastly, are in some things not so quick-sighted while they haste so eagerly to light the nuptial torch; nor is it therefore that for a modest error a man should forfeit so great a Happiness, and no charitable means to release him. Since they who have liv'd most loosely by reason of their bold accustoming, prove most successful in their Matches, because their wild affections unsettling at will, have been as so many divorces to teach them experience."

"It is no less than cruelty, to force a Man to remain in that state as the solace of his Life, which he and his friends know will be either the undoing or the disheartening of his Life. And what is Life without the vigour and spiritual exercise of Life?

How can it be useful either to private or public Imployment ? "

I pass by the element of theological authority in this work, and the " Vindication " of " God and Moses " against the " misattended Words of Christ," noticing only the point that God can truly be said to " join together in holy matrimony " only those the " fit Union " of whose souls " may even incorporate them to love and amity." " Shall we say," cries Milton, " that God hath joined Error, Fraud, Unfitness, Wrath, Contention, perpetual Loneliness, perpetual Discord ? " and calls the offspring of such alliances the " *Children of wrath* and anguish."

The Law, which can restrain " licence and levity and unconsented breach of faith," is too clumsy an instrument to deal with the " inward and irremediable Disposition of Man," and, " in forbidding divorce, rather multiplies Evil. For if Natures resistless sway in Love or Hate be once compell'd, it grows careless of itself, Vitious, Useless to Friends, Unserviceable and Spiritless to the Commonwealth."

After attributing the " unjust Austerity upon Divorce " to the " Letter-bound Servility of the Cannon Doctors " and the superstition of the sacramental view of marriage, exalting it " above the end and person for whom it was instituted," and asserting that the " Papists, who are the strictest Forbidders of Divorce, are the easiest Libertines to admit of grossest Uncleanness," he writes :

" Another Act of Papal Encroachment it was, to pluck the Power and Arbitrement of Divorce from the Master of the Family," and entrust it to a Judicial Court. " The *Popes of Rome* perceiving the great Revenue and high Authority it would give them even over Princes, to have the judging and deciding of such a main consequence in the Life of Man as was Divorce, wrought so upon the Superstition of those Ages, as to divest them of that Right which God from the Beginning had entrusted to the Husband."

He admits, however, that difficulties about dowries, jointures, and the moral conduct of the parties should be under the jurisdiction of a magistrate, but that public authority should not prevail against either an agreement between the parties for dissolution or the will of the husband only.

Concerning the noisome divorce court, he writes that the " Woman whose Honour is not impeach'd is less injur'd by a silent dismission, being otherwise not illiberally dealt with, then to endure a clamouring debate of utterless things, in a business of that civil Secrecy and difficult Discerning, as not to be over much question'd by nearest Friends. Which drew that Answer from the greatest and worthiest *Roman* of his time *Paulus Aemilius*, being demanded why he would put away his Wife for no visible Reason, *This Shoo*, (said he, and held it out on his foot) *is a neat shoo, a new shoo, and yet none of you know where it wrings me:* Much less by the

unfamiliar Cognizance of a fee'd Gamester* can such a private difference be examin'd neither ought it."

He enumerates certain cranks and fanatics of his day, whose "Opinions . . . do end in satisfaction of the flesh, it may be come with reason into the thoughts of a wise Man, whether all this proceed not partly, if not chiefly, from the restraint of some lawful Liberty. . . . As by Physick we learn in menstruous Bodies, where Natures current hath been stopt, that the suffocation and upward forcing of some lower part, affects the head and inward sense with dotage and idle fancies."

I give, in concluding these few quotations, Milton's lovely Myth of Anteros :

"Love, if he be not twin-born, yet hath a brother wondrous like him, call'd *Anteros* ; whom while he seeks all about, his chance is to meet with many falls and feigning desires that wander singly up and down in her likeness : By them in their borrow'd garb, Love, though not wholly blind, as Poets wrong him, yet having but one eye, as being born an Archer aiming, and that eye not the quickest in this dark Region here below, which is not Loves proper Sphere, partly out of the simplicity and credulity which is native to him, often deceiv'd, imbraces and consorts him with these obvious and suborned Striplings, as if they were his Mothers own Sons ; for so he thinks them, while they subtly

* Comparable with Milton's "finical Goosery of your neat Sermon-actor."

keep themselves most on his blind side. But after a while, as his manner is, when soaring up into the high Tower of his *Apogœum*, above the shadow of the Earth, he darts out the direct rays of his then most piercing eye-sight upon the Impostures and trim disguises that were us'd with him, and discerns that this is not his genuine Brother as he imagin'd, he has no longer the Power to hold fellowship with such a personal Mate. For strait his Arrows loose their golden Heads, and shed their purple Feathers, his silk'n Braids untwine, and slip their Knots, and that original and fiery vertue giv'n him by fate, all on a sudden, goes out, and leaves him undeifi'd and despoil'd of all his force, till finding *Anteros* at last, he kindles and repairs the almost faded ammunition of his Deity by the reflection of a coequal and *homogeneal* fire. Thus mine Author sung it to me ; and by the leave of those who would be counted the only grave ones, this is no meer amatorious Novel (though to be wise and skilful in these matters, Men heretofore of greatest name in vertue, have esteemed it one of the highest Arks that human Contemplation circling upwards, can make from the globy Sea whereon she stands) but this is a deep and serious Verity, shewing us, that Love in Marriage cannot live nor subsist unless it be mutual ; and where lòve cannot be, there can be left of Wedlock nothing, but the empty husk of an outside Matrimony, as undelightful and unpleasing to God, as any other kind of Hypocrisie."

CHAPTER VII

FALL OF THE TEMPLE

Poetic genius is either of the *Cherubim*, like Coleridge's, involuntarily expressing its happy state, or of the *Seraphim*, like Milton's, voluntarily discharging its misery in sublimation. The poetry of the former is objective ; that of the latter is subjective, although universal as well as personal.

Milton, who presents in his works an image both of himself and of his life, is openly subjective, and in *Samson Agonistes* obliquely autobiographical—*Samson* being Milton ; *Herapha*, Salmasius ; and so forth ; in passages in his prose works as well as in *Paradise Lost* he is directly autobiographical, but always saved, and, indeed, augmented, in dignity by his *grand manner*, his candour, even by his *naïveté*.

He was an egotist in the sublime sense, of momentous importance to himself and to the world, because, as he felt, he was of momentous importance to God, especially as His champion to "single forth more than once, such of them as were thought the chief and most nominated Opposers on the other

side, whom no Man else undertook." He thought himself qualified in the work by "Gifts of Gods imparting, which," he writes, "I boast not, but thankfully acknowledge and fear also least at my certain Account they be reckoned to me many rather then few," and also by the "wearisom Labours and studious Watchings, wherein I have spent and tir'd out almost a whole Youth."

Justified thus consciously, his egotism in its oceanic alternations of height and depth resembles that of St. Paul. "O that I may thus be perfected by feebleness,"* he writes in his *Defensio Secunda* after more than Ciceronian claims and magnific protestations.

Such religious egotism, indeed, was in the Puritanical air. It is most dynamic in any field of endeavour—and we know what the Ironsides achieved thereby—dilating both the personality and the faculties

> to mightiest deeds
> Above the nerve of common arm.

In Milton it accounts, in one way, for the continuous and accelerating development of his poetic power. It was his centrifugal force ; as his centripetal force was generated by the disillusionments and disappointments of his life.

* Also in the Coleridge *Album Amicorum :* "I am perfected in weakness."

His verse and prose were also an *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*; for he "justified" all his ways, not to mention the "wayes of God." I have already quoted from his *Apology for Smectymnuus*, where he extends at great length the vindication, begun in the introduction to the *Animadversions upon the Remonstrant's Defence*, of his entrance into the civil and religious controversies of his times; and there is another long apology in the Second Book of the *Reason of Church Government*. In the middle of the *Apology for Smectymnuus* he justifies by Scriptural precedent a "vehement vain throwing out Indignation or Scorn upon an Object that merits it," proceeding to show, that, while the Founder of Christianity possessed a much more complex personality than his great Baptist predecessor, the varying elements of his nature were embodied in one and another of the "Teachers of his Church," and that, apart from those who were "indued with a staid Moderation and Soundness of Argument to teach and convince the rational and soberminded," each of them was sent to minister to a community possessing the opposite type of character to that possessed by him—jocundity being tempered by gravity, and conversely. Among these elements he emphasizes the indignation of Christ which inspired the catastrophic outburst against Scribes, Pharisees, and Hypocrites. "Each radical Humour and Passion wrought upon and corrected as it ought," he contends should be "made

the proper Mould and Foundation of every mans peculiar Gifts and Vertues."

He even " apologizes " for not entering the forces of the Commonwealth upon his hurried return from Italy at learning of the outbreak of hostilities. He had not yet come to detest " all the foppery of warr," and his reason for not enlisting was that he could be more serviceable to the Commonwealth with his pen. Nor does it " seem wonderful," as Fenton wrote, " that one of so warm and daring a spirit . . . should be restrained from the camp in those unnatural commotions." Milton was fair game, when he was dead, even for the writer of a prefatory " Life " ; although the sneer, if it be a sneer (it was certainly a sneer in the mouth of Dr. Johnson !), is disguised. But "Alas ! for him who insults me," he had written in his *Defensio Secunda*, " who maligns and merits public execration ! For the divine law not only shields me from injury, but almost renders me too sacred to attack ; not indeed so much from the privation of my sight, as from the overshadowing of those heavenly wings which seem to have occasioned this obscurity ; and which, when occasioned, he is wont to illuminate with an interior light, more precious and more pure."

Egotistic love, however wide its circuit, is a " two-handed engine," and its right hand is hate ! Patriotism—or rather, nationalism—is a form of it. Is not that more effective in its hate ? Does it not possess the ingenuity of Mammon, or Mulciber, and

the statecraft of Beelzebub? Why? Because when it hates it kinetically establishes connection with the world-brain of the barbaric past; the universal subconscious genius, which is as *fire*, whose love is hate. (There is also *Love*, which is as the *sun*, whose egotism, if so it may be called, is a losing and finding itself in an infinitely widening circle.) This dark genius of fear and hate provides in war-time the psychical ammunition with international impartiality.

Napoleon truly said that "great men" were brands that are consumed. "Such joy Ambition findes." Napoleon was a conflagration. The case of Milton is far more difficult. Milton's egotism was positive; Napoleon's sense of destiny, like Timour's conviction of being the "Scourge of God," was negative. Napoleon came to think of himself as a god; Milton never lost the balance of his consciousness of being a minister of God. In his "flaming Days," as Sir Thomas Browne would say (flaming indeed in such a temperament!), he looked upon the Italian "Daughters of Darius" unmoved. Did he escape unscathed the various glamours of his Hell? Did he but circle awhile about those alluring flames, not moth-like, but as a prospecting eagle, "taught by the heav'nly Muse to venture down the dark descent," and then "revisit safe" the "Holy Light"? His super-egotism was proof against every mighty lure; yet, in his exultant sense of such energy and God-given self-sufficiency, did not

he fall into the hardening, alienating apostasy that he was not as other men :

> the common rout,
> That wandring loose about
> Grow up and perish, as the summer flie ?

The ruthless words make answer.

Milton died in sleep so quiet that it was not apparent when he had ceased to breathe. But his spiritual change was in an agony between the pillars in the Temple of Dagon of the Philistines : " straining all his nerves he bow'd "; and, amid a great, rending shout of terror, the whole edifice of disillusionment and scorn and passion and despair, crashed, with noise of thunder, to the ground.

THE END.

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